On Genesis
BEDE

Translated with an introduction and notes by Calvin B. Kendall

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On Genesis
BEDE

Translated with an introduction and notes by
CALVIN B. KENDALL

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To the memory of Charles W. Jones

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Christian biblical interpretation, and for his meticulous critique of my sometimes undisciplined prose. Such help is beyond price.

ABBREVIATIONS

Alter	*The Five Books of Moses* [= Pentateuch]
Ambrose, *Hex.*	*Hexaemeron*
ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
Augustine, *CF*	*Contra Faustum Manichaeum*
—— *DCD*	*De ciuitate Dei*
—— *DGAL*	*De Genesi ad litteram*
—— *DGCM*	*De Genesi contra Manichaeos*
Basil/Eust., *In Hex.*	*Eustathii in Hexaemeron S. Basilii latina Metaphrasis*
Bede, *DNR*	*De natura rerum*
—— *DST*	*De schematibus et tropis*
—— *DTR*	*De temporum ratione*
—— *HE*	*Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*
—— *In Cant.*	*In Cantica Canticorum*
—— *In Gen.*	*In Genesim*
—— *In Sam.*	*In primam partem Samuhelis*
BHW	*Bede and his World*, ed. Lapidge
Blaise	*Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*
BOH	*Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*
BOT	*Bedae opera de temporibus*
Bwf	*Beowulf*
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum series latina
Colgrave and Mynors	*Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
Douay-Rheims	The Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate
DrR	'Dream of the Rood'
EHR	*English Historical Review*
Gregory, *Hom.*	*Homiliae in Euangelia*
Isidore, *Etym.*	*Etymologiae*

Iuxta LXX	According to the Latin translation of the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament)
Jerome, *Ep.*	*Epistolae*
—— *In Ezech.*	*Commentarii in Hiezechielem*
—— *Hebr. quaest.*	*Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos*
—— *Hebr. nom.*	*Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum*
Josephus, *Ant.*	*Historiae antiquitatis iudaicae*
KJV	King James Version of the Bible
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
Migne	Migne, PL
Niermeyer	*Mediae latinitatis lexicon minus*
OLD	*Oxford Latin Dictionary*
PG	Patrologia cursus completus, series Graeca
PL	Patrologia cursus completus, series Latina
Pliny, *NH*	*Naturalis historia*
RB	*Revue Bénédictine*
Souter	*A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 AD*
Speiser	*The Anchor Bible: Genesis*
TTH	Translated Texts for Historians
Vulgate	The Latin Vulgate Bible
Weber/Gryson	The Weber and Gryson edition of the Vulgate

INTRODUCTION

For much of the last century, the Venerable Bede (673–735) was best known for his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and his *Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, works indispensable for an understanding of the early history of Anglo-Saxon England. His biblical commentaries, which comprise the bulk of his scholarly output, received less attention. In the last thirty years, however, a flood of new editions and translations of the commentaries has altered the landscape.[1] Bede's *Commentary on the Beginning of Genesis* (hereafter *On Genesis*) is crucially important among them because Bede regarded the opening chapters of Genesis as the foundation narrative of the world.[2] It was here that one should look to understand divine cosmology and God's plan for his people. From it Bede derived the theoretical basis for his scientific treatises and his notion of the English as a chosen people of God, which informs the *Ecclesiastical History*.[3] In an age which has seen a resurgence of fundamentalist thought and action in all three of the great monotheistic religions based on the book, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, it is well to be able to trace ideas that now seem retrograde to a time and a text where they constituted the latest, most intellectually and 'scientifically' reputable accounts of the nature of the world and the place of mankind in relation to God.

BEDE'S AUDIENCE

On Genesis was not one of Bede's biblical commentaries most in demand in the Middle Ages, perhaps, as M. L. W. Laistner surmises, 'because Ambrose, and, for advanced readers, Augustine, had already preempted the field'.[4]

1 See Bibliography.

2 The best introduction to *On Genesis* is Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis'.

3 See Hanning, *The Vision of History*, p. 70; Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 125–31.

4 Laistner, *Hand-List*, p. 41. Laistner has in mind such works as Ambrose's *Hexaemeron* and Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* and *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*; see Bede's Preface

Nevertheless, at least 22 manuscripts of the work survived into modern times, a not insignificant number. George Hardin Brown aptly describes it as 'historically well-represented'.[5] In his overview of Bede's life and works, Brown registers the common perceptions that Bede's commentaries on the books of the Bible that the Fathers had already commented on extensively 'display Bede's talents as an adapter and synthesizer' and that he undertook them 'in order to sift and collate the best of the Fathers' comments and to digest and simplify the material for the slower, less sophisticated English'.[6] Bede's words to Acca in the Preface to *On Genesis* certainly convey this sense. But we must not be misled by Bede's deprecation of the capabilities of the English into the assumption that *On Genesis* is a simplistic work for the simple-minded. Bede is famed for his clear-headed commonsense. I detect a hint of sarcasm in his praise of the Fathers, who 'have left to posterity many monuments of their ability', works which 'are so copious and deep that so many volumes can scarcely be acquired except by the very wealthy and such profound matters can scarcely be studied except by the very learned'.[7] His admiration for their scholarship is genuine, but there is a corrective note in what he says.

The twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, where Bede was educated and spent his entire working life, were royal foundations.[8] The primary audience that Bede envisaged for his writings was not only his fellow monks and the rarefied band of scholars or *doctores*, among whom he counted himself, but the teachers, preachers, and rulers who were responsible for the welfare of his Anglo-Saxon countrymen.[9] Still, it was a learned audience, and largely aristocratic.[10] The ease with which he addressed the highest-ranking persons of his society, kings, bishops, and abbots alike, has

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to Acca (below, p. 65). For evidence of early interest in *On Genesis*, see Whitelock, 'After Bede', pp. 4 and 10 (*BHW*, pp. 38 and 44).

5 Brown, 'Bede's Neglected Commentary on Samuel', p. 140.

6 Brown, *Bede the Venerable*, pp. 42–43. See Carroll, *The Venerable Bede*, p. 250. McClure ('Bede's *Notes on Genesis*', pp. 17–19) makes similar remarks, though at the same time (e.g., p. 26) she speaks of the sophistication of *On Genesis*. For alternative views, see DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam*', pp. 1–2, and n. 5.

7 *In Gen.* Preface 4-5; 18-21 (below, pp. 65–66).

8 On land granted by King Ecgfrith of Northumbria in 674 and 681. See Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 184–85.

9 See Thacker, 'Bede and the Ordering of Understanding', pp. 43–46; Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform', pp. 130–33.

10 The point is well made by Hill, 'Bede and the Boors', *passim*.

led to speculation that he himself came from an exalted social status.[11] His preferred language was Latin, which was not the tongue of any native inhabitant of the British Isles. The English were the second people after the Irish to learn Latin as a second language.[12] Bede's education was excellent and his knowledge of the language impeccable.[13] He seems to have assumed that his potential readers shared his competence, though surely most of them were not quite up to his standard.[14] Bede never talks down to his audience – indeed, the Latinity of *On Genesis* is more elaborately 'rhetorical' than that of his *Ecclesiastical History* – but he does take the trouble to confine himself to the salient points of the commentary tradition and to present sophisticated material in a relatively clear fashion.[15] Busy people would benefit from having the words of the Bible and the message they carried explained in language that they could put to use in their duties.[16]

Bede was a true Gregorian in his concern for pastoral care.[17] If I judge

11 Jones ('Bede's Place in Medieval Schools', p. 276) quotes a ninth-century gloss from Jumièges to the effect that 'we know that he was an Englishman of most noble ancestry, an ornament of the priestly order, replete with learning in all the arts, as the course of his exposition in every way fully manifests'. See also Thacker, 'Bede and the Ordering of Understanding', p. 40. *HE* is famously addressed to King Ceolwulf of Northumbria (reigned 729–737; died ca. 764); several commentaries, including *On Genesis*, are dedicated to Bishop Acca; *DTR* is dedicated to his own Abbot Hwætbert; etc. However, the fact that Bede was never appointed as prior or abbot might suggest the opposite – that he came from a low social status. See Brown, *Bede the Venerable*, p. 15.

12 Ogilvy, 'The Place of Wearmouth and Jarrow', pp. 2 and 6 (*BHW*, pp. 238 and 242).

13 On Bede's education, see Whitelock, 'Bede and his Teachers and Friends', pp. 24–25.

14 The story that on his death-bed he was engaged in translating the Gospel of John into English may suggest that in his later years he was not so sanguine about his countrymen's potential for bilingualism as he might once have been. See Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede, edited and translated in Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 579–87; Crépin, 'Bede and the Vernacular', pp. 177–78; Ward, Preface to Foley and Holder, *Bede: A Biblical Miscellany*, p. xxv.

15 The 'simplicity' of Bede's style has been over-emphasized. See the remarks by the following scholars, all calling attention to various aspects of Bede's stylistic, rhetorical, and exegetical sophistication: Kendall, 'Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*: The Rhetoric of Faith', esp. pp. 147–67; Brown, 'Bede's Neglected Commentary on Samuel', pp. 136–39; Ray, 'Who Did Bede Think He Was?', pp. 11–19; Thacker, 'Bede and the Ordering of Understanding', pp. 37–39; and Sharpe, 'The Varieties of Bede's Prose'.

16 On Bede's 'practical aim', see Jenkins, 'Bede as Exegete and Theologian', pp. 163 and 165.

17 On Bede's affinity with Gregory the Great and his concern for pastoral care, see Meyvaert, 'Bede and Gregory the Great', p. 5 (*BHW*, p. 111); Ward, *High King of Heaven*, pp. 1–13; DeGregorio, 'The Venerable Bede on Prayer and Contemplation', pp. 11–15; on the pastoral thrust of his exegesis, see Ray, 'What Do We Know about Bede's Commentaries?', pp. 9–11; Holder, 'Bede and the Tradition of Patristic Exegesis', pp. 400 and 410–11; Ward, *The Venerable Bede*, p. 71.

rightly, his first priority in *On Genesis* was to provide information and instruction for the working clergy. This concern suggests that he must have had in mind a secondary audience or an audience at one remove, the audience for his audience, so to speak. Numerous passages read like eloquent flights suitable for use in sermons. Bede cannot have assumed that the people most in need of instruction and correction, the newly converted, the illiterate or semi-literate, those prone to idolatry or heresy, would be readers of his works. He speaks to them through his primary audience. *On Genesis* does not have the reformist urgency of his Letter to Ecgbert or even *On Ezra*.[18] It is well to keep in mind that Bede believed that the evening of the Sixth Age was approaching,[19] 'when, with *iniquity abound*ing everywhere, *the charity of many grows cold* [Matt. 24:12]. Its advent, moreover, will be darker by far than the others [i.e., the evenings of the first five Ages], when, with the appearance of the man of sin, the son of iniquity, who is lifted up and raised over all because he is called God, or because he is worshipped, the tribulation will be so great that even the elect may be induced into error, if that can happen. And the hour of universal judgement will immediately follow'.[20] It is not easy to be certain, when Bede castigates sin, whether desire for reform or anticipation of the apocalypse is the dominant motive. For the most part, however, I should say that the bent of Bede's mind was rather in the direction of correcting abuse than towards filling men's minds with the terrors of Last Judgement.[21] It would be the role of his primary audience to convey his message of correction and admonition to the wider world of Anglo-Saxon England.

BEDE'S METHODOLOGY: LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE AND NOAH'S FLOOD

In form, *On Genesis* is a verse-by-verse commentary on the book of Genesis from its beginning through verse ten of chapter 21.[22] Bede quotes each verse

18 On Bede's reformist agenda, see Thacker, 'Bede's Ideal of Reform'; DeGregorio, 'The Reforming Impulse of Bede's Later Exegesis'; DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram and Neemiam*'; and DeGregorio, *Bede: On Ezra*, pp. xxxi–xxxvi.

19 On the Six Ages of the World, see below, p. 12 and n. 56.

20 *In Gen.* 1.1193-1200 (below, p. 104).

21 On the balance in Bede's thought between pessimism and optimism with regard to the Sixth Age, see Davidse, 'The Sense of History in the Works of Bede', pp. 662–63.

22 For a survey of the 'Latin Genesis tradition', within which *On Genesis* can be placed, see O'Loughlin, *Teachers and Code-Breakers*. For the narrower tradition of literature on the Six Days of Creation (*Hexaemera*), see Robbins, *The Hexaemeral Literature*.

or short sequence of verses in turn[23] and then follows it with his explanations, which are sometimes drawn verbatim from the patristic fathers and always intended to represent the orthodox tradition.

It is fundamental to Bede's thinking that the events narrated in the Old Testament happened according to the letter of the text. Therefore, the first task of the commentator on the Bible was to understand its literal meaning, and Bede never lost sight of this obligation.[24] As J. D. A. Ogilvy observes, 'Although Bede accepted the fourfold exposition of Scripture and practiced it with skill, the natural tendency of his mind … was towards the factual and historical'.[25] This is a shrewd insight, as long as it is recognized that Bede nearly always caps his analyses of the biblical texts with an explanation of their spiritual significance, especially their moral import or the way in which they reconcile Christian practice with Old Testament precept.

Literal interpretation was not a simple matter. Bede knew very well that Western Christendom relied on Latin translations which were at one or more removes from the original languages of the Bible. The ages of several of the patriarchs from Adam to Noah before and after the birth of their first son, for example, differed in the Septuagint as against the Vulgate translation. As a result, Bede calculates the number of years before the flood as 1656 according to the Vulgate, but 2242 according to the Septuagint.[26] In this case, Bede accepts Augustine's argument that scribal error probably accounted for the numbers in the Septuagint and that therefore the numbers deriving from the 'Hebrew Truth' were to be preferred.[27] Biblical language was often metaphorical, and Bede understood that the 'literal' sense was to be found in the tenor, not the vehicle, of the metaphor.[28] Minor discrepancies are sometimes artfully explained, but they are never ignored. Bede notices what most readers surely do not – that Shem seems to have been born when Noah was 502 years of age, although Scripture states that he was born in Noah's 500th year (Gen. 5:31). Bede suggests that Moses might have rounded off

23 The sequence of verses is uninterrupted in book 1, but there are numerous omissions in books 2–4.

24 On exegesis emphasizing the literal or historical sense in the Middle Ages, see Laistner, 'Antiochene Exegesis in Western Europe', pp. 19–31; O'Loughlin (*Teachers and Code-Breakers*, pp. 161–62) examines the reasons Jewish and early Christian exegetes had for reading Genesis in particular as a factual history of creation.

25 Ogilvy, 'The Place of Wearmouth and Jarrow', p. 4 (*BHW*, p. 240).

26 *In Gen.* 2.776-81 (below, p. 163).

27 *In Gen.* 2.790–800 (below, p. 164).

28 See his discussion of the metaphorical meaning of 'the blood of lives' (Gen. 9:5), *In Gen.* 2.2146-55 (below, pp. 205–206).

the number 'rather carelessly as it were'.[29] The range of problems at the literal level of interpretation might require at various points the specialized skill of a textual scholar, a linguist, a philologist, a grammarian, a historian, a scientist, or a computist.

A problem typifying Bede's outstanding qualities as an interpreter of the text was the question of the duration of Noah's flood. It is a measure of the unexpected complexity of literal interpretation that he could point out a fact that has escaped the notice of ancient commentators and modern scholars alike – that the flood lasted for precisely one solar year of 365 days.

The story of Noah's flood is told in chapters 7 and 8 of Genesis. There are several somewhat confusing indicators of time in the received text: it rained for 40 days and nights (Gen. 7:4; 7:12; 7:17); the waters were upon the earth for 150 days (Gen. 7:24; 8:3); after 40 days Noah sent forth doves in successive weeks until the third dove did not return, indicating that the waters had receded from the earth (Gen. 8:6-12); 'the ark rested in the seventh month, the twenty-seventh day of the month' (Gen. 8:4); the waters decreased until the tenth month (Gen. 8:5), etc. This plethora of lesser periods of time and intermediate dates, seven days, 40 days, 150 days, the seventh month, the tenth month, etc., did not seem problematic to patristic commentators, who worried instead about such issues as whether the Noachian year was as long as it now is, or whether the flood could really have covered the tops of the highest mountains, or whether the ark could have been big enough to hold representatives of all the species of animals.[30] Numbers such as seven, ten, 40, and 150 simply provided a happy hunting ground for numerical allegory (for which, see below). So, quoting from Augustine's *Contra Faustum*, Bede comments that Scripture 'properly says that it rained for forty days and forty nights upon the earth; for ten multiplied four times makes forty, because every sin of sinners that is included in the ten commandments of the Law, throughout the whole world, which is comprised of four parts, is washed by the sacrament of heavenly baptism, whether the sin, because it pertains to the days, was brought about by the prosperity of things, or by the misfortune of things, because it pertains to the nights'.[31]

But in the end there is no apparent mystery about the ultimate duration of the flood. The narrative is bracketed by two references to the calendar. The flood began in the 600th year of Noah's life, 'in the second month, in the seventeenth day of the month' (Gen. 7:11), and ended in the 601st year

29 *In Gen*. 3.757-60 (below, p. 240).

30 Cf. Augustine, *DCD* 15.14; 15.27; etc.

31 *In Gen*. 2.1601-08 (below, p. 188).

of Noah's life, 'in the second month, the twenty-seventh day of the month' (Gen. 8:14) – a span, so it might seem, of 375 days.

With the advent of the 'higher criticism', modern scholarship could not rest content with the resolution that these calendar dates provided. The modern consensus is that the various indications of time in the story of the flood are the result of 'an ingenious interweaving' of two different sources, J and P.[32] The Yahwistic (J) flood 'was caused by a forty-day rain and lasted sixty-one days',[33] but the Priestly (P) flood 'lasts much longer; not sixty-one days, but a year and ten days'.[34] It does not seem to occur to modern commentators any more than it did to ancient ones to wonder whether they have really understood what was being said.

Bede's concern, of course, was not with hypothetical sources that lie behind the text, but with the final redaction (as modern scholars see it). He took for granted that the 'Hebrew truth' as translated in the Latin of the Vulgate was the word of God transmitted through the agency of Moses. The important thing was to ask what the text of Gen. 7:11 and 8:14, the calendar dates quoted above, meant. And he came up with an unexpected answer: 'It should be noted, *on the literal level so to speak*, that the men and animals that entered the ark on the seventeenth day of the second month and departed a year later on the twenty-seventh day of the same month were in the ark for an entire solar year [my italics]'.[35] He goes on to explain why: 'If, for example, the seventeenth day of the moon fell today on the calends of April [April 1], the twenty-seventh day of the moon would fall next year on the day before the same calends [March 31], when the three hundred sixty-five days in which the solar year is completed had run their due course'.[36] His argument is based on the understanding that the month referred to would be a lunar month and on the fact that a *lunar year* can be defined as the period

32 Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 119. See Speiser, pp. xxii–xxix; 1–20, and von Rad, *Genesis*, pp. 24–28, for accounts of the documentary sources of Genesis. The three major sources are commonly referred to as P (for Priestly Document), J (for Yahwistic Document), and E (for Elohistic Document).

33 Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 120. The duration of the Yahwistic flood is not transparent to a modern reader (and, of course, would have been inconceivable to Bede). It emerges into plain sight only when the intermingled Priestly matter is omitted and the Yahwistic phrases are slightly rearranged. Even then, the period of 61 days seems to depend on the assumption, for which I can see no warrant, that Noah released the first dove (Gen. 8:8) seven days after the end of the 40 days and nights of rain.

34 Von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 128.

35 *In Gen*. 2.1926-29 (below, p. 198).

36 *In Gen.* 2.1929-33 (below, pp. 198–99).

of time from any given day of the moon in a given lunar month to (and including) the first preceding day of the moon in the same lunar month in the following year. He elsewhere calculates the 'common' lunar year (one with just 12 lunar months) as 354 days.[37] Therefore, in a common lunar year the period of time from the 17th day of a lunar month to the 16th day of that same lunar month in the next year will be 354 days, and to the 27th day, (354 + 11 =) 365 days. His expert knowledge of the Hebrew and Roman calendar systems and the method of calculating Easter, and his scientific turn of mind, enabled him to see what others had and have missed.[38] His conclusion that the Genesis account of the duration of the flood was predicated upon an adjustment of the Hebrew lunar year of 354 days to bring the elapsed time up to a full solar year of 365 days is an example of the literal interpretation of the text at the highest level of interpretative skill.

BEDE'S METHODOLOGY: ALLEGORICAL EXEGESIS

'Allegory' is an off-putting term in contemporary discourse. As it is commonly used, the term refers to a kind of narrative not much in favour with modern readers. When we are told that Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is an allegory of Gloriana, or that Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory of the progress of the soul towards salvation, these shadow narratives don't interest us much, and we read with other pleasures in mind. But allegory as it was understood and used in the Middle Ages is rather different and more interesting. It was an outgrowth of the methods developed by Christian scholars for use in interpreting the Bible.[39] The Scriptures, made up of the canon of the books of the Old and New Testaments, that is, those books recognized by the Christian community as divinely inspired, constituted the word of God. Because in the New Testament God revealed himself in human form with the promise of salvation, but in the Old Testament this revelation and promise was not explicitly discussed, what was manifest in the New Testament must have been veiled in the Old. The Testaments had to be harmonized. Allegory, sanctioned by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians (chap. 4) and given an authoritative exposition by St Augustine, supplied the harmonizing mechanism. Augustine's formulation, that 'the

37 *DTR* 36.12-14 (*BOT*, p. 249).

38 An important modern (1903) exception is Böklen, 'Die Sintflutsage', p. 54.

39 For its roots in 'Jewish haggadic exegesis' and 'Stoic rules of interpretation that had evolved from the study of Homer', see Caplan, 'The Four Senses of Scriptural Interpretation', p. 285.

New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is laid open in the New', is classic.[40]

The letter of the text was the indispensable basis for any subsequent allegorizing. It could not be disregarded. Bede opens *On Genesis* with a warning that commentators on the Bible should not give short shrift to the literal text in their zeal to uncover allegorical meaning: 'But it must be carefully observed, as each one devotes his attention to the allegorical senses, how far he may have forsaken the manifest truth of history by allegorical interpretation'.[41] Yet at the end of the commentary he censures literalists who insist upon carrying out to the letter such rituals of the Old Covenant as circumcision by accusing them of retreating 'into the shadows of figures'.[42] The 'shadows' are the uninterpreted letters of the text that prefigure or 'foreshadow' the truths of the New Covenant. It was the responsibility of the commentator to unveil this overburden of meaning.

Bede practised three distinct methods of allegorical interpretation – figural, numerical, and etymological. Each is a large topic. It will suffice here to summarize their distinctive features briefly. Medieval commentators began with the premise that the actors and actions of the history recorded in the Bible constituted a sacred language, part of God's message to mankind, the meaning of which was sometimes obscure or difficult to reconcile with contemporary notions of morality. Such passages required interpretation. Figural allegory was based on the assumption that the history of the Jewish people set down in the Old Testament was factually true, but that it also had spiritual meaning pertaining to the New Testament and to the Christian world. A person or event in the Old Testament could be interpreted as a 'figure' or 'type' or 'shadow' of another person or event in the New Testament, which was its 'fulfilment' or 'antitype', or which it 'foreshadowed'.[43] The range of types in the Old Testament was virtually unlimited; the range of antitypes in the New was narrow – the Trinity, Christ, the sacraments, the Holy Family, the Church. Furthermore, a double interpretation of every Old Testament type was potentially available – its immediate fulfilment occurring in the Incarnation narrative, and its ultimate fulfilment in the anticipated event of Last Judgement. And, when commentators found a moral in an Old Testament story that applied to Christians in the present, or the 'Sixth

40 … *et in uetere nouum lateat et in nouo uetus pateat*. Augustine, *Quaestiones* 2.73 (CCSL 33, 106). See also Augustine, *DCD* 4.33; 5.2; 5.18; 16.26.

41 *In Gen.* 1.29-31 (below, p. 69).

42 *In umbras figurarum*, *In Gen.* 4.1730 (below, p. 321).

43 The most influential study is Auerbach, '"Figura"', pp. 11–76.

Age', as Bede liked to call it, they were, in effect, adding another level of interpretation – a moral, or 'tropological' level.

In his textbook on rhetoric, *De schematibus et tropis*, Bede, following in the footsteps of Jerome, Cassian, and Gregory,[44] formalized this potentiality of literal and spiritual meanings.[45] He described four possible levels of interpretation of a biblical text once the meaning of the letter of the text has been determined: a literal level and three spiritual levels – typological,[46] tropological, and anagogical. That the meaning of an allegory could be literal as well as spiritual was Bede's special contribution to the methods of allegorical interpretation as they were usually described. An allegory with a literal meaning was one that referred to some historical reality other than Christ or the Church. Both figure and fulfilment belong to the unredeemed world, which may be defined either as the world before the arrival of the Redeemer, Christ, or as the world of the Sixth Age, the contemporary world insofar as it has not fully accepted redemption. The literal level of interpretation in Bede's methodology is not to be confused with the sign or symbol being interpreted (the 'letter' of the text). Despite appearances, Bede has not added another level of meaning to the 'fourfold' method. Rather, he isolates the 'sign' from the things that it signifies on the literal, typological, tropological, and anagogical levels. The literal level refers to some reality in the unredeemed world.[47] The three spiritual levels offer a spiritual meaning of the text with respect to the past, the present, and the future of the reader. A typological allegory refers to Christ or the Church; a tropological, or moral, allegory refers to the moral experience of the individual Christian in the present; and an anagogical allegory refers to the joys of heaven that the

44 Cf. Jerome, *In Ezech.* 4.16 (CCSL 75, 160–61); Cassian, *Collationes* 14.8 (CSEL 13, 404–407; Gregory, *Moralia*, Preface to Leander of Seville, 3 (CCSL 143, 4).

45 *DST* 2.12 (CCSL 123A, 161–69); for discussion, see Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 140–51; Kendall, Introduction to Bede's *The Art of Poetry and Rhetoric*, pp. 25–28. Plummer's remarks on Bede's use of the allegorical method are still valuable: see *BOH* 1, lvi–lxii. On the background and development of Bede's exegesis, see Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 131–40; Kendall, *The Allegory of the Church*, pp. 3–14; O'Loughlin, *Teachers and Code-Breakers*, pp. 157–205, esp. pp. 198–99. Brown's comments on Bede's allegorical method in his commentary on Samuel are germane to *On Genesis*: see 'Bede's Neglected Commentary on Samuel', pp. 129–39. Standard treatments of medieval allegory include Mâle, *Religious Art in France*, pp. 138–45; Caplan, 'The Four Senses of Scriptural Interpretation', pp. 282–90; Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, pp. 1–36; de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*; and Daniélou, *From Shadows to Reality*.

46 'Typology' is a modern coinage.

47 For allegory on the literal level, see Ray, 'What Do We Know about Bede's Commentaries?', pp. 13–14; Kendall, Introduction to Bede's *The Art of Poetry and Rhetoric*, p. 27.

Christian may look forward to.

The system offered a methodology; it was flexible, not prescriptive. In *On Genesis*, as in his other commentaries, Bede seldom attempts to find more than one spiritual meaning in any passage. Nor was he wedded to a 'fourfold' system. In his one explicit reference to the multiple levels of allegory in *On Genesis*, he invokes a threefold system: historical, allegorical, and anagogical.[48] It suited the text he was explicating. The fourfold method suggested possible fields of interpretation for investigation. Two or more things or texts could have the same allegorical meaning, one thing could have several meanings on the same level, and a single thing could have one or more levels of interpretation. The polyvalency of signs was assumed.

In the last analysis, Bede's methods were literary-critical.[49] They gave him a way of playing with the text to tease out unexpected layers of meaning. At one point, in a curious exercise in what might be called 'reverse allegorization', Bede imagines the figurative language that Noah (as a type of Christ) might have used to signify what in fact Christ says in the gospel of Matthew.[50] In another kind of reverse typology, the saints of the Sixth Age exemplify or imitate the spiritual meaning predicated for them by the types of the Old Testament. The phrase *in exemplum*, which I have translated as 'in remembrance', is used in this sense. So, the dove that Noah sent forth from the ark and which could not find a place for her foot to rest (Gen. 8:8-9) 'signifies the spiritual and guileless mind of the elect. … [And] in remembrance of this dove, such persons despise all the delights of the world by flying higher, as it were, to such an extent that they take care not even to come in contact with them with the least traces of their mind, seeing that they can find no true rest for themselves in this world'.[51] *In exemplum* is something like the post-Incarnation mirror equivalent of *figura* or *signum*.

The number symbolism of the Middle Ages derives in part from Pythagoras.[52] Plato's *Timaeus*, the first two-thirds of which was continuously preserved throughout the early Middle Ages in the Latin translation with commentary

48 *In Gen.* 4.695-705 (below, pp. 291–92).

49 A point emphasized by Jones ('Bede's Commentary on Genesis', p. 151).

50 *In Gen.* 2.1917-21 (below, p. 198); for another possible example of reverse allegorization, see *In Gen.* 2.2325-31 (p. 211).

51 *In Gen*. 2.1803-11 (below, pp. 194–95).

52 On number symbolism in Bede and the patristic Fathers, see Jenkins, 'Bede as Exegete and Theologian', pp. 173–80; Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 166–74; Kendall, 'Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*: The Rhetoric of Faith', pp. 167–70; and Meyer and Suntrup, *Lexikon*, *passim*.

of Chalcidius,[53] was a repository of these ideas. Certain numbers and their multiples were considered to have innate meanings and constructive values. St Augustine repeatedly stresses the importance of being able to interpret the meaning of the numbers that occur in the Bible: 'An ignorance of numbers … causes many things expressed figuratively and mystically in the Scriptures to be misunderstood'.[54] The various ways numbers could be factored or otherwise made to exhibit smaller components provided endless grist for the mill of numerical allegory. Six, for example, was said to be the number of perfection because it is the first number that is the sum of its factors (1 + 2 + 3 = 6).[55] Bede borrows this approach from his sources, but he is as much interested in the way numbers establish relationships and connections as he is in the constituent meanings of numbers *per se*. Whenever it suits a moralizing purpose, he trots out the conventional assertion that the number six signifies 'perfection'. But it is of greater thematic importance that the number six connects allegorically the works of the first six days of creation with his favourite doctrine of the Six Ages of the World – the subject of the major excursus with which he concludes his commentary on the Genesis creation narrative (Gen. 1–2:3).[56]

Scholars in the Middle Ages had a special fondness for etymology.[57] One of the most widely circulated books of the time was Isidore of Seville's encyclopaedic tome, the *Etymologies*. Isidore did not confine himself, of course, to etymology – he covered the whole scope of knowledge, human and divine – but it was his starting point. From the modern perspective, ancient and medieval etymology was a hit-and-miss science. Etymologists found relationships, real or fancied, between words that looked similar in some respect, and they tried to unearth the original meanings of proper names that derived from foreign languages. Bede had occasional recourse to the hunt for relationships: 'Earth [*terra*]', he says, 'is so-called in Latin, because it is rubbed smooth [*teratur*] by the feet of animals'.[58] He probably took this bit of (false) etymologizing from Isidore. But his deeper interest lay in the other

53 Though this was apparently unknown to Bede.

54 *De doctrina Christiana* 2.16.25, trans. Robertson, p. 51.

55 *In Gen.* 1.966-68 (below, p. 96).

56 *In Gen.* 1.1093-1225 (below, pp. 100–105), and n. 149 (pp. 100–101); see references to the topic at 2.505-19 (pp. 155–56); 2.845-51 (pp. 165–66); 3.712-15 (p. 238); 4.408-11 (p. 283); 4.1555-58 (p. 316), etc. Bede even wrote a hymn on 'The Work of the First Six Days and the Six Ages of the World' (CCSL 122, 407–11).

57 See Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. 495–500; Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, esp. pp. 34–37; 54–58.

58 *In Gen.* 1.359-60 (below, p. 79).

branch of etymology. Because the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and Hebrew was assumed to be mankind's original God-given language,[59] the root meaning of Hebrew names had to have divine significance. St Jerome did extensive research on this subject in the course of preparing his new translation of the Bible into Latin on the basis of 'the Hebrew truth'. Bede drew widely from three of Jerome's books on the subject, *The Location and Names of Hebrew Places*, *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, and *The Meaning of Hebrew Names* (Jerome makes frequent comments on Hebrew in his other works as well).[60] For instance, to pick only one example from many, Bede explains the allegorical significance of God's renaming of Abraham's wife on the basis of Jerome's etymologies. 'The reason her name was changed is that formerly she was called "my princess" [*Sarai*], that is, the mistress of one household alone, but hereafter she is called simply "princess" [*Sarah*], … for she is now to be the princess of all nations'.[61]

To most modern observers the procedures of medieval allegorical exegesis seem all too free-wheeling and permissive.[62] Bede was not immune to anxiety on this score. He worried that in their unbridled zeal to uncover allegorical senses commentators like himself could fall into error and mislead their auditors. It was this concern, probably, that led him to distinguish between spiritual meanings authorized by God and meanings that were the product of human ingenuity. The latter were 'veiled' or 'hidden' allegories in the way we ordinarily understand them, and Bede usually employs terms such as *typus* and *figura* to characterize them. But when the allegorical meaning is proclaimed by God (that is, announced or explained in the text of the Bible), then Bede refers to it as a *signum*.[63] He was groping for a distinction between what we might call 'sign' and 'symbol' – a distinction that he could use to distinguish the work of exegetes from the express word of God. Among the signs that Bede finds in Genesis are the rainbow that God declares is 'the sign of a covenant between me, and between the earth' that he will never again destroy all living things with the waters of a flood (Gen. 9:13-15),[64] and circumcision, which, like the rainbow, God specifically calls a 'sign'

59 See *In Gen.* 3.227-33, and n. 66 (below, p. 222).

60 *De situ et nominibus locorum Hebraicorum*, *Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos*, and *Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum*.

61 *In Gen.* 4.469-78 (below, p. 285).

62 On the misuse of the system by medieval preachers, see Caplan, 'The Four Senses of Scriptural Interpretation', p. 287.

63 Bede also refers to miracles in the history of the Church that demonstrate the sanctity of God's agents on earth as *signa*. See Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bede and Plummer', p. 376.

64 *In Gen.* 2.2230–35 (below, p. 208).

according to the Vulgate text: 'And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, that it may be for a sign of the covenant between me and you' (Gen. 17:9-11).[65] The allegorical meaning of these signs is incontrovertible.

In an analysis growing out of discussion of the meaning of the three hundred years that Enoch walked with God (Gen. 5:23-24), Bede contrasts the Cross as a *signum* with the *tau* or T, the Greek letter standing for the number 300, which contains the *figura* of the Cross.[66] The analysis brings into focus the distinction he was trying to make between sign and symbol. In the context of the story of Enoch, the commentator may claim that the *figura* of the Greek letter symbolizes the Cross, though in other contexts it clearly would not. This, however, is a human interpretation of a veiled allegory; it does not carry the authoritative weight of the open allegory of a sacred sign. The same *figura* may be interpreted differently by different commentators, and each bears the burden of responsibility for the doctrinal correctness and conformity to the law of Christian charity that must legitimate the interpretation.[67]

THE THEMATIC STRUCTURE OF *ON GENESIS*

In broadest outline, Bede structured the four books of his commentary on the theme of exile. Book 1 (the original version of *On Genesis*) ends with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise (Gen. 3:24), and book 4 ends with Sarah's demand that Hagar and Ishmael be driven out into the desert (Gen. 21:9-10).[68]

For Bede, as for his medieval contemporaries, exile was the fundamental metaphor for the condition of human life on earth.[69] A deep sense of alienation characterized the European Middle Ages. The ordered, secure life promised by the Roman Empire had proved illusory. One reason for the triumph of Christianity in the fourth century may have been its capacity to provide a framework of ideas that could explain the condition that people found themselves in and to provide hope for the future in a threatened world. The Fathers of the Church, particularly Augustine, Pope Gregory the Great,

65 *In Gen.* 4.371-77 (below, p. 282).

66 *In Gen.* 2.865-70 (below, p. 166); see also *In Gen.* 2.2416-23 (p. 214), and *In Gen.* 3.1590–97 (p. 265).

67 See Kendall, 'The Responsibility of *Auctoritas*', pp. 111–19, for fuller discussion.

68 Book 2 ends with the death of Noah after the flood (Gen. 9:29), and book 3 with the blessing of Melchizedek on Abraham (Gen. 14:18-24).

69 The classic study is Ladner, '*Homo Viator*', esp. pp. 233–42.

and the founder of Benedictine monasticism, Benedict of Nursia, were able to rationalize this sense of alienation. In a disordered world, order was the ideal, but perfect order could be found only in God – which is to say, perfect order lay outside or beyond the material world. Thus, there were two levels of experience – the here and now, and the transcendent Other. Because God created the world, it was in some fundamental way good. Therefore the separation or estrangement of the world from God must result from an original calamity – the fall of mankind (Gen. 3). Here one finds an explanation for disorder, for evil. When mankind turned away from God, order was broken. The disorders of the natural world followed inexorably. Plague, war, and famine, endemic conditions of late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, signified God's displeasure in the Sixth Age, as Bede abundantly illustrates in the opening chapters of his *Ecclesiastical History*.[70] The root cause, however, could be traced to Adam and Eve, and its consequences spread throughout the narrative of Genesis. Bede explains that after Abraham went down into Egypt God inflicted famine, plague, and captivity on the just and the unjust as a warning and a message of hope: 'Thus it was plainly revealed not only that the just would endure in this life the universal evils of the world, such as famine, plagues, and captivity, along with the wicked, but also that they would suffer particular afflictions from the wicked, in order to receive in the life to come in return for all these evils those rewards which the wicked know not of'.[71]

As a result of the Fall, men and women entered 'the exile of this temporal life'[72] and became strangers in a strange land, condemned to wander as outcasts and pilgrims. This estrangement of the world from God was obviously evil. It made the world seem foreign, not a true home. Bede explains that the name 'Nimrod', the founder of Babylon, who 'signifies figuratively the devil himself',

> means 'tyrant' or 'exile' or 'sinner', … For he is a tyrant because, rebelling against the Creator, he strove to obtain the citadel of God and the kingdom of the world; he is an exile because, having fallen from heaven, and having been cast out from the society of the angels who remained constant in their own position, the wretch leapt too high; he is a sinner because he scorned to be obedient to the will of his Maker.[73]

70 E.g., *HE* 1.2-3 (war); 1.12-14 (famine); 1.13-14 (plague). See Kendall, 'Imitation', pp. 180–81.

71 *In Gen.* 3.1147-52 (below, p. 251).

72 *In Gen.* Preface 34-35 (below, p. 66).

73 *In Gen.* 3.133-41 (below, pp. 219–20).

Men and women were exiles, wayfarers, pilgrims, wandering on the road of life, a road beset with dangers and temptations. The vocabulary is rich and interchangeable: *peregrini*, *alieni*, *extorres*, *hospites*, *profugi*. They thought of life as a journey in search of their 'eternal fatherland in heaven',[74] their 'heavenly home', as an Anglo-Saxon poet expressed it,[75] which was with God. The natural world, the road they travelled on, was imaged as a *wilderness*, or a *desert*, inhabited by wild beasts. Their longed-for home, unattainable in this life, was imaged as an ordered *city*, with its walls and gates and towers representing security from the dangers they faced. The goal is reflected in the title of St Augustine's *The City of God*.

Because it came from God, order was good even if it were only partial; so earthly order was desired. But order might also be threatening because it could distract one from the ultimate goal, which was to reach one's true fatherland with God. Consequently, there was another kind of estrangement, which was good rather than evil: *estrangement from the world* for the sake of winning the kingdom of heaven. St Paul supplied the text, calling those who 'died according to faith … pilgrims [*peregrini*] and strangers [*hospites*] on the earth' (Hebr. 11:13), a text that Bede has occasion to quote in his commentary.[76] For those, like monks and nuns, who withdrew from the world, there could be a reversal of polarities: they sought out the *wilderness*, the *desert*, because that was the true image of life on earth, and it would not distract them from the pursuit of heaven.[77] To this attitude may be attributed what James Dean has called Bede's 'primitivism', as exemplified in Bede's comments on the inventions of Jubal and Tubalcain:[78] 'Bede … points out that these inventions pertain to the attractions and luxuries of this life. He contrasts the life of technology with Abel's pastoralism and with the gener-

74 *In Gen.* 4.1358 (below, p. 310).

75 In *Dream of the Rood*, 148a ('*heofonlicne ham*') (*The Vercelli Book*, ed. Krapp, p. 65).

76 *In Gen.* 4.1368-70 (below, p. 311).

77 In its extreme form this image points to the eremetic ideal – the life of the hermit. Bede admired aspects of this life, as witness his two Lives of Cuthbert, but in *On Genesis*, the ideal he consistently puts before his readers is the *regular* life of Benedictine monasticism (using the term 'Benedictine' loosely). As Ward ('Bede and the Psalter', pp. 4–5 [*BHW*, pp. 873–74]) points out, 'there is little evidence, apart from the respect shown by Bede for certain chapters of the [Benedictine] Rule, that it was any more than one rule among many which the abbots drew upon to organize life in the new monasteries'. The evidence is sifted by Mayr-Harting, 'Bede, Rule of St Benedict, and Social Class', *passim*, and Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', pp. 141–45.

78 *In Gen.* 2.520–69 (below, pp. 156–57).

ally unencumbered existence of Seth's descendants, the *peregrini*'.[79] Such *simplicitas* is part of the monastic ideal. Abraham, who 'willingly went into exile [*exsulans*]'[80] into Egypt (Gen. 12:1-10), provided the pattern. Bede's spiritual interpretation of these verses transparently makes the connection with monasticism:

> Certainly we go out from our country when we renounce the pleasures of the flesh, from our kindred when we strive to strip ourselves of all the vices with which we were born (insofar as this is possible for men!), and from the house of our father when we struggle out of love for the heavenly life to abandon this world with its prince the devil. For we are all born into the world as sons of the devil on account of the sin of the first transgression; but by the grace of rebirth all of us who belong to the seed of Abraham are made the sons of God.[81]

Paradoxically, for the monk or nun exile meant a life of enclosure.[82] Bede's condemnation of those who 'love the wide journeyings of the world more than the enclosures of the Christian way of life'[83] applies to all Christians, but looks to the monastic life as the ideal.

The pattern is repeated when Abraham 'went into exile [*peregrinatus est*] in Gerar' (Gen. 20:1). Those who imitate him 'take care to lead a changed life among men, that is, a heavenly life in place of an earthly, an angelic life in place of a human'.[84] Monasticism was for Bede a perfected model for the Church and society.[85] It offered the highest type of earthly existence. Where God says to Noah, 'You shall take unto yourself of all food that may be eaten, and you shall lay it up by you; and it shall be food for you and them' (Gen. 6:21), Bede's comment is: 'And the Lord filled his Church with the varied nourishment of spiritual life, in order both to attract the crowds of the faithful to a comprehension of the heavenly rewards by the universal precepts of his commandments, and to call all those who are made more perfect by the disciplines of a stricter rule to the higher rewards of the same eternal kingdom'.[86]

The *city* with its attractions and delights could become a snare, which might put one on the broad path leading to perdition. The tension between

79 Dean, 'The World Grown Old', p. 559.
80 *In Gen.* 3.968-69 (below, p. 246).
81 *In Gen.* 3.1011-19 (below, p. 247).
82 See Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', p. 152.
83 *In Gen.* 2.1796-97 (below, p. 194).
84 *In Gen.* 4.1348-50 (below, p. 310).
85 Mayr-Harting, 'Bede, Rule of St Benedict, and Social Class', p. 14 (*BHW*, p. 420).
86 *In Gen.* 2.1363-70 (below, pp. 181–82).

these two poles lay at the heart of the human experience; it was the basis of Augustine's image of the two cities, which Bede incorporated into his exegesis.[87] Babylon, the city of 'confusion', stood opposed to Jerusalem, the city of 'the vision of peace'.[88] The very first city, the city founded by Cain (Gen. 4:17), 'announced allegorically that the whole hope of the wicked was to be fixed upon the kingdom of this world and upon good fortune, seeing that they had neither faith nor a desire for future blessings'.[89] Yet, 'the elect, after they walk with the Lord in this life, humbly following his commandments, are borne by him into the life of perpetual repose, and do not appear again among mortals, because they are living immortally with him. For they are his city and temple'.[90]

This reversal of polarities illustrates the bivalency of medieval symbolism in general – the tendency of images to convey meaning *in bono et in malo*, for good and for evil. The *sensus in bono et in malo* is an integral component of Bede's exegetical method, as he explains in his *Commentary on Tobias*: 'Do not marvel, reader, that typologically men's good deeds sometimes signify evil and their bad deeds sometimes signify good'.[91] Or, as he puts it in *On Genesis*: 'it is customary in the Scriptures not only for evil things to be signified by good men, but also at times for good things to be signified by wicked men'.[92]

Exile implies return to a promised land, but return is never to the same place. There will be a new beginning from a new starting-point. And though every beginning is shadowed with the prospect of a new fall, God's plan of salvation is inscribed in the nature of things.[93] Never fully articulated, but constantly implied, is the progressive movement of peoples from east to west. Paradise, where mankind originated, lay in the far east, no longer

87 Markus, 'Bede and Ecclesiastical Historiography', p. 14 (*BHW*, p. 398); Davidse, 'The Sense of History in the Works of Bede', pp. 678–79.

88 *In Gen.* 3.375-79 (below, p. 228); cf. Bede's spiritual interpretation of Babylon, *In Gen.* 3.542-709 (pp. 233–38).

89 *In Gen.* 2.462-66 (below, p. 154).

90 *In Gen.* 2.487-90 (below, p. 155).

91 *Ne mireris lector quod aliquando bona typice malum aliquando bonum mala hominum facta significant*. Bede, *In Tobiam* 2.10/11.3-5 (CCSL 119B, 5); cf. Bede, *In Sam.* 2.993-1001; 1040–49 (CCSL 119, 91–92; 93); Bede, *In Ezram* 2.1009-46 (CCSL 119A, 313–14); Bede, *De octo quaestionibus* 6.230–39 (ed. Gorman, p. 69). See Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 149–51.

92 *In Gen*. 4.1515-16 (below, p. 315).

93 Davidse ('The Sense of History in the Works of Bede', p. 669) emphasizes the importance of the Incarnation in providing the possibility of a 'new start' through conversion.

accessible to mortals.[94] When the Church has been established in the farthest reaches of the west,[95] the apostolic mission will have been accomplished, and the time for the Seventh and Eighth Ages will be at hand.[96] In *On Genesis*, Bede sets the rhythms for the entry of the Anglo-Saxons into England, the new promised land of the west,[97] though he never mentions his own country by name.[98]

A second theme, which is equal in importance to the theme of exile, involves the privileging of the younger over the elder. It is rooted in a radical paradox, several times repeated in the Old Testament and noted by St Paul, that the younger son is blessed above his elder brother.[99] The emblematic case is the narrative of the twins Esau and Jacob. With his mother's connivance, Jacob, the younger twin, successfully tricks his father Isaac into bestowing the elder son's blessing on himself (Gen. 27:1-35). Variants on the motif include the stories of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1-16) and Ishmael and Isaac (Gen. 21:1-10), the latter being the point at which Bede ends his commentary. The motif imposes a narrative demand for explanation, interpretation, and justification. Bede associates it with the rhetorical figure of *prolepsis* or 'anticipation'.[100] 'The lineage of the family of Noah', Bede says, 'begins with his youngest son [Japheth] and is completed with his eldest [Shem]. This mode of expression [i.e., *prolepsis*] is common in the Holy Scriptures, signifying mystically that, with the coming of Christ in the flesh, the younger

94 *In Gen.* 2.288-93 (below, p. 149).

95 Bede's focus, of course, is on Europe, the northwest, rather than Africa, the southwest. The British Isles constitute the most northwesterly part of Europe. Beyond them lies the 'boundless ocean' (*HE* 1.1). As my colleague Edward M. Griffin kindly points out, this theme of *translatio* persists strongly into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a way to account for the Americas.

96 Bede allegorizes the completion of the *west side* [*occidentalis plaga*, my emphasis] of the tabernacle (Exod. 26:22) as properly signifying 'the completion of the entire holy universal Church, which is accomplished at the end of this world' (*recte adimpletionem totius sanctae uniuersalis ecclesiae quae cum in fine huius mundi perficitur designat. De tabernaculo* 2.915; 917-18 [CCSL 119A, 65]). The association of the 'west' with end-times accounts for the frequent placement of Last Judgement scenes above the western portals of Romanesque and Gothic churches.

97 See Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 125–31.

98 The nearest he comes is his reference (quoting Jerome) to the 'British ocean'. *In Gen.* 3.54 (below, p. 217). It is remarkable that Bede never mentions Rome, either (there is one isolated reference to the Roman empire), despite the fact that he is famed for being a partisan of the Roman Church.

99 Cf. Romans 9:12-13.

100 For *prolepsis*, see Bede, *DST* 2.1.1 (CCSL 123A, 143–44).

people of the Gentiles were going to be preferred in faith to the older people of the Jews'.[101] Bede's solution is to look for spiritual meaning, to transpose the problem to the allegorical level. Thus there emerges the pervasive theme in which the old is contrasted unfavourably with the new, the elder with the younger. The contrast may be between the bad and the good, as in the story of Cain and Abel, or between the good and the better, as in the contrast between the Old and the New Covenant or the Synagogue and the Church. There is considerable instability in the interpretations implicit in the negative pole, as, for example, in the contrast between the 'old man', Adam, and the 'new man', Christ, with Adam variously interpreted *in bono* or *in malo*. There is also some instability in the positive pole, as in the relationship between Shem and Japheth (for which, see below), where Japheth both is and is not subordinated to his elder brother. Other contrasts in which the theme comes into play include those between Abraham and Melchizedek, the Old Testament and the New Testament, and Jews and Christians or Jews and Gentiles.

The binary opposition of Synagogue and Church dramatically unifies the contrast between older and younger and the theme of exile.[102] Commenting on Gen. 9:20 ('And Noah, a husbandman, began to till the ground and planted a vineyard'), Bede observes that Noah did so 'because the Lord, having a care for the human race, established the Synagogue among the Jewish people'.[103] The Jewish Synagogue is a positive good, a necessary seedbed for the Christian Church. But in his allegorical interpretation of Gen. 2:24 ('Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh'), Bede explains that Christ left his mother, the Synagogue of the Jews, and cleaved to his wife, the Church, 'which he gathered together from all the nations'.[104] Already the theme of exile is present in embryonic form. Bede draws his commentary on Genesis to its conclusion with a long and eloquent exposition of Gen. 21:9-10 ('And when Sarah had seen the son of Hagar the Egyptian playing, she said to Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall

101 *In Gen.* 3.4-8 (below, p. 215).

102 On the spiritual level there is not opposition, but continuity. Bede remarks that the elect who were born before the Incarnation are called the Synagogue; those who were born after, the Church; *ea fidelium portio quae incarnationis dominicae tempora praecessit sinagoga quae uero hanc secuta est ecclesia nuncupatur* (*In Cant.* 1.6-7 [CCSL 119B, 190]). Carroll, who calls attention to this passage (*The Venerable Bede*, pp. 69–70), elucidates the distinctions that Bede makes between Synagogue and Church (pp. 67–77).

103 *In Gen.* 2.2277-79 (below, p. 209).

104 *In Gen.* 1.1858-61 (below, p. 124).

not be heir with my son Isaac'), having on a former page laid the groundwork for its interpretation: 'In Galatians [4:22-31] the Apostle has discussed very fully how Hagar and Ishmael signify the Synagogue and the Old Covenant, just as Sarah and her son Isaac signify the Church and the New Covenant'.[105] In his exposition Bede again invokes the authority of Paul to make clear that this spiritual interpretation does not imply a literal rejection of the writings and writers of the Old Covenant.[106] Although it is to be respected, it has been superseded; it is mired in the carnal, the New Covenant is spiritual; it lies in the shadows, the New Covenant in the light. Ishmael was born 'according to the flesh' by the courses of Nature, but Isaac was a 'son of the promise', born of Grace. To hold to the letter of the Law after the Incarnation, while denying its spiritual meaning, is to act the part of a bastard (Ishmael), to persecute the heirs of the promise, to 'seek temporal benefits from the Lord to the neglect of eternal ones'.[107] Thus, Ishmael, the elder son, is sent into exile. Nevertheless, exile is a temporary condition; however difficult and arduous, it holds out the hope of return and a new beginning. Finally, in the evening of the Sixth Age, at the approach of the end of time, even those Jews still unconverted and other non-believers will be saved, for 'the religious doctrine of the universal Church holds that before the day of Judgement, that is, at the imminent advent of the Antichrist, [Enoch] will return with Elijah for the conversion of this age'.[108]

JEWS AND SARACENS

The stain of anti-Semitism in Bede's work is unmistakable.[109] The question naturally arises whether he was expressing a personal animosity based on actual experience with Jews or a theoretical condemnation based on his understanding of the Bible and the patristic commentary tradition. This question can be answered with reasonable confidence. There is no evidence of the presence of Jewish communities in England before the end of the

105 *In Gen.* 4.208-11 (below, p. 278). Cf. Gal. 4:22-31.

106 *In Gen.* 4.1671-73 (below, p. 320).

107 *In Gen.* 4.1746-47 (below, p. 322).

108 *In Gen.* 2.832-34 (below, p. 165).

109 Jones was the first to call attention to this. See 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 130–31 and 194. For a comprehensive and penetrating study of anti-Semitism in Anglo-Saxon England, see Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel*. Scheil considers Bede's anti-Semitism at length in the Introduction and chs. 1–2. See also Thacker, 'Bede and the Ordering of Understanding', pp. 55–57.

eleventh century.[110] It is doubtful whether Bede ever physically encountered a Jew. The abbots and other members of the Wearmouth-Jarrow community who made trips to the Continent may have had contacts with Jews which they reported to him, but if so these contacts left no discernible trace, and in any case they could hardly be responsible for the form Bede's anti-Semitism takes. Where did it arise, then, and what purpose did it serve?

Although violent anti-Semitism preceded the polemics of the Christian Fathers, being widespread in Greek-speaking communities of the Mediterranean as early as the first century AD,[111] it is the Fathers, and in particular Augustine, who transmitted it to Bede. A chilling example, with the hindsight of history, is Bede's mystical interpretation of Genesis 4:15 ('And God set a sign upon Cain, that whosoever found him should not kill him'): 'The Jewish nation has, whether under pagan or under Christian kings, the sign of its Law, by which it is distinguished from other nations and peoples; and every emperor or king, who finds them in his kingdom, finds them with this sign and does not kill them: that is, he does not prevent them from being practising Jews, as long as they are set apart from association with other nations by some fixed and particular sign of their observance'.[112] Bede's comment is a verbatim quotation from Augustine's *Contra Faustum*. Augustine appears to have taken it for granted that Jews in every community were required to wear some distinguishing mark of their faith that set them apart from other peoples. There is a telling elision from the 'sign' of Mosaic Law (circumcision) to an outwardly visible 'sign' of discrimination (an item of clothing?), both deriving from the 'sign' that God set upon Cain. The fact that these are Augustine's words, however, does not absolve Bede from the responsibility of choosing to quote them. Why does he do so?

When applied to Bede's world of thought, the concept of 'anti-Semitism' can be understood in its precise etymological sense (anti-Shem).[113] This is a fundamental key to his emphasis on the theme in *On Genesis*. His comments both in the passage quoted and elsewhere are directed against (or stand in opposition to) the descendants of Shem in order to clear space for

110 See Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel*, p. 7, and n. 14.

111 Johnson ('Jew against Jerusalem', p. 7) remarks on 'the virulence of [Greek] anti-Semitism in the first century AD'.

112 *In Gen.* 2.424-30 (below, p. 153).

113 Scheil (*The Footsteps of Israel*, pp. 8–9 [following Gavin Langmuir]) usefully distinguishes between the 'anti-Judaism' of Bede and the early Middle Ages and the 'antisemitism' of later periods, the latter being 'characterized by more fantastical, irrational suppositions' (p. 8). The point I am developing here has a different aim.

Japheth, the ancestor in his eyes of all the Europeans, including the Anglo-Saxons.[114]

The Genesis text is unequivocal. All mankind is descended from the three sons of Noah – Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen. 9:18-19). God blesses the three sons (Gen. 9:1), but Noah curses Canaan, the son of his middle son Ham, because Ham had seen his nakedness (Gen. 9:24-27). From Shem were descended Abraham (Gen. 11:10–26) and the chosen people of God (Gen. 22:17-18), and, according to the Gospel of Matthew, Abraham's line led directly to Christ (Matt. 1:1-17). These facts could not be ignored. But the message of the New Testament, as interpreted by the patristic Fathers, was that these were the same people who killed Christ.[115] Here was the nub of the problem. How could 'Christ-killers' be the chosen people? And how could the gospel be preached to a people who had not been chosen?

Bede's strategy for dealing with this problem is multi-faceted. In a move to side-step the issue of the line of Abraham, he adopts Augustine's allegorization of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.[116] Shem and Japheth, the oldest and youngest sons, foreshadow Christianized Jews and Christianized Gentiles, respectively, while Ham prefigures the 'Jewish people' in a pejorative sense (that is, Jews defined as the chosen people who perversely refuse to accept Christ). In this spiritual interpretation of the three sons of Noah, the geographical distribution of their descendants is irrelevant. The primitive Church 'was gathered from the Israelite people', signified by Shem, but with the election of the Gentiles, signified by Japheth, the Church 'has filled the whole world'.[117]

However, the letter of the text of Genesis, chapter 10, resounded with the names of the generations of the sons of Noah, and their tribes and kingdoms, and the lands they occupied. Beginning with Josephus, commentators began to associate them with places and peoples familiar to the classical world. With the help of Jerome, who was in turn dependent on Josephus, Isidore investigated at length the geographical locales of the 72 tribes or nations descending from the three sons. He summed up his findings in three separate statements: (1) 'These are the tribes which descend from the race of Shem,

114 *In Gen.* 3.8-14, and note (below, p. 215).

115 See, e.g., Augustine, *DCD* 4.34.

116 *In Gen.* 2.2294-331 (below, pp. 210–11). In the *City of God*, Augustine takes Shem and Japheth as types of the circumcised and the uncircumcised, the Jews and the Greeks, and Ham as standing for heretics (*DCD* 16.2).

117 *In Gen.* 2.2347-72 (below, p. 212).

possessing the southern land from the East as far as Phoenicia'.[118] (2) 'These are the tribes of the race of Ham, which possess the whole southern region from Sidon as far as the Strait of Gibraltar'.[119] (3) 'These are the tribes of the race of Japheth, which occupy the middle part of Asia from Mount Taurus to the north and all Europe as far as the British ocean, giving their names both to places and peoples'.[120] From this somewhat confusing welter of information, Bede constructed the precise geographical formulation according to which Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah, populated the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe, respectively, although he was careful to note that the descendants of Ham and Japheth 'also possessed some portion of Asia'.[121] He aligned the three groupings of peoples as described in Genesis with his understanding of contemporary populations and the physical layout of the world with its tripartite division of the lands around the Mediterranean into Asia (east), Africa (southwest), and Europe (northwest). The descendants of Shem, the Christianized Jews, inherited Asia (primarily Asia Minor). Africa was occupied by peoples who rejected Christ, descendants of Ham.[122] Europe, the boundaries of which would have been only a little less vague in his mind than those of Asia and Africa, was the home of the Christianized Gentiles, the descendants of Japheth. This scheme made sense of the world as Bede understood it.

It may come as a surprise, given the sinister use to which the assumption that Ham was black was later put in America and elsewhere as a justification for slavery, that neither in Bede, nor in any later medieval writer who repeated his formulation, was Ham set apart by race. Remarkably, Ham is not depicted as black in Western art until the nineteenth century.[123] However, Bede is not wholly blameless in this matter, for he does insinuate that Ham's

118 *Haec sunt gentes quae de Sem stirpe descendunt, possidentes terram meridianam ab ortu solis usque ad Phoenices*. Isidore, *Etym*. 9.2.9.

119 *Haec sunt gentes de stirpe Cham, quae a Sidone usque ad Gaditanum fretum omnem meridianam partem tenent*. Isidore, *Etym*. 9.2.25.

120 *Haec sunt gentes de stirpe Iaphet, quae a Tauro monte ad aquilonem mediam partem Asiae et omnem Europam usque ad Oceanum Brittanicum possident, nomina et locis et gentibus relinquentes*. Isidore, *Etym*. 9.2.37.

121 *In Gen.* 3.12-14 (below, p. 215). Braude ('The Sons of Noah', p. 112) traces the three-son, three-continent formulation back to Alcuin, *Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesin*, PL 100, 532: [question:] *Quomodo divisus est orbis a filiis et nepotibus Noe?* [answer:] *Sem, ut aestimatur, Asiam, Cham Africam, [et] Japhet Europam sortitus est*. But Alcuin certainly had this from Bede.

122 Africa in Bede's lifetime had been overrun by the Saracens, whom he associated with the line of Ishmael, as I discuss below.

123 Braude, 'The Sons of Noah', pp. 120–28.

grandson, Nimrod, was black: 'And Nimrod is the son of Cush, which means Ethiopian, since truly the old enemy always arises as if afresh from a dusky nation [*de obscuro … populo*] of infidels by the performance of wicked teaching or work'.[124] Bede turned to Jerome as his source for the meaning of 'Cush', and etymologists believed that Ethiopia derived its name from the colour of its inhabitants. From there it was but a step to the association of the colour black with sin and infidelity, and Bede took it.

An important element in all this was the deep-seated Anglo-Saxon interest in their own tribal genealogy, as keen as that of the Hebrews in the Old Testament and of Matthew in the New. It is to Bede's credit that he refrained from the temptation he must have felt to tie the ancestry of the Anglo-Saxons more specifically to one of Japheth's seven sons. In *HE* 1.15 he traced the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxon invaders Hengest and Horsa back only as far as Woden. Later Anglo-Saxon chroniclers constructed royal genealogies that reached beyond Woden to Sceaf (cf. *Bwf* 4a: *Oft Scyld Scefing*…, 'Oft Scyld, the son of Sceaf…'), who was sometimes stated to be a fourth son of Noah.[125] But Bede leaves no room for doubt that the Anglo-Saxons were among the tribes descended from Japheth, thereby making them eligible to be heirs of the New Covenant.

On the linguistic level, Bede makes room for the descendants of Japheth by distinguishing between 'Israelites' on the one hand and 'Jews' on the other. The *antiquus Dei populus*, the 'ancient people of God',[126] are 'Israelites', 'the people of Israel' (*populus Israel*). But in the context of the New Testament and the Christian world that followed he more often refers to the same people as 'Jews'. ('Hebrews' is a more neutral term, which he applies to Jews of any period, ancient or modern.) The term 'Jewish people' (*populus Iudeorum*) is almost always intended as a slur. 'Jews' or the 'Jewish people' are, like Cain, full of rage,[127] they are degenerate, proud, and faithless.[128] They shed the blood of Christ; they crucified him.[129] By implication, therefore, the 'Jews' deserved to be superseded by a new chosen people, by the Gentiles, the descendants of Japheth, who had, equally with Shem, been blessed by

124 *In Gen*. 3.150–53 (below, p. 220).

125 See Harrison, 'Woden'; Anlezark, 'Sceaf, Japheth and the Origins of the Anglo-Saxons', esp. pp. 13–27; Hill, 'The Myth of the Ark-Born Son of Noe'. The Anglo-Saxon genealogies are conveniently printed by Klaeber, *Beowulf*, pp. 254–55.

126 *In Gen.* 1.521; 3.279 (below, pp. 83 and 225).

127 *In Gen.* 2.336-41 (below, p. 150).

128 *In Gen.* 2.2325-28 (below, p. 211); 3.691-95 (p. 237); 4.1516-20 (p. 315).

129 *In Gen.* 2.346-48 (below, p. 151); 2.373-75 (p. 151); 2.2288-93 (p. 209).

God, and who, like him, was a beneficiary of Noah's curse of Canaan.

A second people who begin to appear as a menace in Bede's mind are the Muslims, whom Bede refers to as 'Saracens'.[130] One might suppose that the Saracens would be slotted in as descendants of Ham, the inhabitants of Africa, but it doesn't turn out that way. Saracens are an inconsequential people in Bede's sources. In the fourth-century *Life of St Anthony*, they are benign and kindly.[131] Jerome, however, identified them as nomadic desert marauders, descendants of Ishmael, and this was decisive for Bede. Jerome's Saracens were a pre-Islamic people of no political or theological concern to Christian society, but in Bede's lifetime, Arabian desert dwellers embraced Islam and began to overrun large portions of the Christian world. By the time he composed book 4 of *On Genesis*, ca. 722–725, Bede had become aware of the magnitude of this threat. He quotes Jerome's words on the nomadic Saracens of the desert, and then continues: 'But this was long ago. Now, however, [*Ishmael's*] *hand* is *against all men, and all men's hands* are *against him* [Gen. 16:12], to such an extent that the Saracens hold the whole breadth of Africa in their sway, and they also hold the greatest part of Asia and some part of Europe, hateful and hostile to all'.[132] This may be the first application of the term 'Saracens' to the Islamic Arabs who by the beginning of the eighth century had swept over the southern and eastern portions of the old Roman Empire and established an Islamic empire.[133]

Typologically, Bede explains, the descendants of Ishmael (the older son) signify the heirs of the Old Covenant, while the descendants of Isaac (the younger son) signify the heirs of the New.[134] Which is to say, the biological descendants of Ishmael, the Saracens, are typologically equated with Jews, while the biological descendants of Isaac, the Israelites, are typologically

130 On the etymologies, genuine and fanciful, of 'Saracen', a term 'unique to Christian writers', see Scarfe Beckett, *Anglo-Saxon Perceptions*, pp. 93–97 (quotation at p. 95).

131 Athanasius, *Vita Antonii*, ch. 24.

132 *In Gen.* 4.246-56 (below, p. 279).

133 See Bonner, 'Bede and Medieval Civilization', p. 73; Wallace-Hadrill, 'Bede's Europe', pp. 1–7, esp. p. 6 (*BHW*, pp. 73–79; esp. p. 78; Scarfe Beckett, *Anglo-Saxon Perceptions*, esp. pp. 123–39. Bede refers to the defeat of the Saracens in Gaul in *HE* 5.23, which sentence, if he means the Battle of Tours (AD 732), must have been inserted after the completion of *HE* in 731. See Plummer, *BOH* 2, 338–39; Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. ix (n. 19); Wallace-Hadrill, *A Commentary*, p. 199. Bede's references to the Saracens are numerous. Among the more significant are *In Sam*. 4.817-30 (CCSL 119, 231); *DTR* 66, AM 4639 [AD 688] (CCSL 123B, 527); *ibid.*, AM 4649 [AD 698] (CCSL 123B, 529); *ibid*., AM 4680 [AD 721] (CCSL 123B, 534–35).

134 *In Gen.* 4.238-43 (below, p. 279).

equated with Christians.[135] Bede has it both ways. Christians descend biologically from Japheth, the third son of Noah, but typologically from Shem, the first son. In the pairing Shem/Japheth, Shem signifies the Old Covenant and Japheth the New, but in the pairing Ishmael/Isaac, who are of the line of Shem, Ishmael signifies the Old Covenant and Isaac the New. Thus, as Andrew Scheil well puts it, 'the Anglo-Saxons are understood as both the "Old Israel," consumed by fire and conquest for their sins, and also as the "New Israel," the agents of supersession – the newly elect of the Lord'.[136] The pattern of privileging the younger over the elder yields allegorical fruit from any branch of the genealogical tree.[137]

In the final analysis, the Jews, and to a limited extent the Saracens, constitute the ultimate negative antithesis of Bede's Christian ideal. They are the extreme limit towards which backsliders, apostates, heretics and pagans tend, descendants of Cain and Ham and Ishmael.[138] The Jews make up the worst case because they were privileged to be the first to receive the truth, and they closed their eyes and stopped their ears. They represent the abyss that yawns before their latest successors, the newly converted and newly instructed English.[139] Much of Bede's anger toward the Jews and the hatred, madness and blindness that he attributes to them boils up from the precious, but precarious, situation of the Anglo-Saxons and their Church on the western edge of the known world and from his concern for the spiritual welfare of both as the evening of the Sixth Age drew near. Jews and Saracens were the mirrors in which his wider audience could be forced to perceive their own shortcomings.[140]

135 Bede spells out this equation in one of his sermons: 'For just as he who goes through life without guile is truly an Israelite, so the Jews, however many there may be who have degenerated from the simplicity of the Patriarch in the deceit of their hearts, even though they are physically from Israel, have lost the name of Israelites'; *Si enim uere Israhelita est qui doli nescius incedit, iam perdidere Iudaei nomen Israhelitarum quamuis carnaliter de Israhel quotquot doloso corde a simplicitate patriarchae sui degenerauerunt*. *Homeliae* 1.17.174–77 (CCSL 122, 124). Cf. Rom. 9:6–8.

136 Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel*, p. 109.

137 As it continues to do long after Bede. Consider the typological implications of the pairing of the New World with the Old.

138 Grendel and his mother, the monsters of the first part of *Beowulf*, are notoriously descendants of Cain or Ham, depending on how the manuscript readings are resolved (*Bwf* 107a, 1261b).

139 In the opinion of Davidse ('The Sense of History in the Works of Bede', p. 683), 'the heretics were not the only ones, even not the first ones, whom Bede viewed as the great menace to the church; the greatest threat were the believers who confessed the orthodox faith …, yet led a worldly life: the "falsi christiani"'.

140 In a similar vein, see Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel*, p. 43.

BEDE'S COSMOLOGY: THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION

Bede's commentary on God's creation of the world as reported in the initial verses of Genesis is the place to examine his conception of the nature of things and the methods he employed in their analysis. His approach may be termed 'proto-scientific' both in the sense that he took the created world to be rational and ordered and, therefore, capable of being understood, and in the sense that he believed it the duty of the investigator to account for all the data, however messy or apparently contradictory some of them might appear to be.[141] His approach differed from the ancient one in that it united theory with observation and experiment. It is a measure of Bede's independence of mind, his freedom from the mindset of the late Antique period, that he took seriously the responsibility of looking for rational or 'scientific' explanations of natural phenomena.[142] It is instructive to turn to Bede from a reading of Augustine's *City of God*. To an extraordinary extent the whole classical pantheon of gods was still a living reality for Augustine. Of course, he reinterprets the gods as demons or fallen angels, but there they were. Augustine inhabited a demon-haunted world. Bede stands on the near side of the divide between that world and ours. There may be occasional evil spirits in Bede (as there are in Shakespeare),[143] but the classical gods are no longer a reality or a threat, and the world is by and large rational and orderly.

Bede's approach differed, however, from modern scientific methods in that he assumed not one but two equally objective sources of the data to be interpreted – the book of nature and the book of Scripture.[144] The two streams of data both flowed from God and thus could not conflict. Indeed, if they appeared to contradict one another at some point, the first obligation of the commentator was to find their underlying harmony. Moreover, because the data were both physical and verbal,[145] the methods that Bede applied

141 See Stevens, 'Bede's Scientific Achievement', esp. p. 5 (*BHW*, p. 649) (reason and order) and p. 19 (p. 663) (not forcing data).

142 On the anti-scientific outlook of the late classical and early Christian periods, especially in regard to Augustine, see MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, pp. 87–89.

143 One of Bede's few explicit references to 'evil [or 'foul'] spirits' or 'demons' in *On Genesis* comes tellingly after a quotation from *The City of God* in which Augustine invokes 'the spirits of the air' (*In Gen.* 4.133-42 [below, p. 276]).

144 The metaphor of the 'book' of nature developed and spread in the twelfth century and its pairing with the book of Scripture was a favourite topos of the Renaissance. See Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp. 319–26; Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book*, *passim*. The metaphor does not appear in Bede.

145 In a curious way, this applies to the book of nature as well as to the book of Scripture. Bede knew by heart and frequently recited the opening verses of Psalm 18: 'The heavens

were as much literary-critical as scientific.[146] In this respect they converge with the methods of his allegorical exegesis.

Bede's first concern is to lay out the fundamental assumption of his cosmology – the eternity and omnipotence of God, which he derives from the first verse of Genesis, 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth'. The fact that it is derived from a specific statement and not just asserted is important, because a closer look at the verse uncovers two other complex issues – the nature of time and the problem of language. 'In the beginning' implies that time is bounded, finite. If bounded, time can be measured. It is a function of the created world and pertains quintessentially to human affairs. 'In the beginning' also implies, although Bede does not draw the implication out here, that time, like the world, will have an end. Because God is not limited, he must exist outside of time and therefore be eternal.[147] Language is problematic for, as a product of the time-bound, finite world of human endeavour, it can never be fully adequate to express God's providence. The Bible is God's word, but the language in which it is expressed is human. Thus, though the statement 'God created heaven and earth' might seem to put the creation of heaven before that of earth, this supposition is a consequence of the fact that language can only express instantaneous simultaneity sequentially in time. Some slippage between God's intention and man's understanding of it is inevitable. Bede observes that the 'Prophet', by whom he means David, says, 'In the beginning you founded the earth, O Lord'. If the earth was created in that instantaneous moment 'in the beginning', he reasons that we may infer simultaneity in the creation of heaven and earth.[148] Analytical comparison of texts is one way of overcoming the defects of language.

Bede uncovers the physical details of his cosmology from the subsequent verses of the Genesis narrative of creation. There is a higher heaven and a lower heaven. The higher heaven or the 'heaven of heavens' lies beyond human sight. At the moment of creation it was filled instantly with the blessed host of angels.[149] The lower heaven extends from the ethereal realm of the

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narrate the glory of God, and the firmament declares the work of his hands. / Day utters speech to day, and night shows knowledge to night. / There are no speeches nor languages, where their voices are not heard' (Ps. 18:2-4 [Ps. 19:1-3]). Nature *speaks* to mankind.

146 According to Wallis ('Reframing Bede's "Science"', pp. 68–69), 'Bede's "science" is both uncertain in its boundaries and unclear in its definition', but, she concludes, the term 'science' may be used 'to designate Bede's ideas about the material creation and his response to its intellectual challenges'. See especially her comments (*ibid*., pp. 72–78) on book 1 of *On Genesis*.

147 *In Gen.* 1.1-6 (below, p. 68).

148 *In Gen.* 1.16-24 (below, p. 68).

149 *In Gen.* 1.35-74 (below, pp. 69–70).

lights – the sun, the moon, and the stars – down to the murky atmosphere of air, which is capable of sustaining the flight of birds. Darkness is nothing positive, nothing created; it is merely the absence of light. God created light to beautify the rest of his creation, which consists of the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water. Thus Bede can explain the statement elsewhere in the Bible that God 'made the world of unformed matter' (Wisdom 11:18). Matter was 'unformed' only in the sense that its form, its beauty, came into being subsequently with the creation of light.[150] Only the higher heaven 'enjoy[s] to the full fixed and perpetual light'.[151] The world, including the lower heaven, is always in darkness in one part, while the other part is illuminated. The lower heaven, half light and half dark, revolves about the stationary earth, bringing night to the upper part of the world on the evening of the first day. On the second day God created the firmament dividing the lower heaven from the upper heaven, which would become the sphere of the fixed stars.[152]

Like most other cosmographers ancient and medieval, Bede conceived of the earth as a stationary sphere about which the sun revolved.[153] In his scientific textbooks, *The Reckoning of Time* (*DTR*) and *On the Nature of Things* (*DNR*),[154] he explains how the earth is divided into five zones – the northern, which is frigidly cold and uninhabitable; the north temperate, which is habitable; the 'equinoctial' (or equatorial), which is torrid and uninhabitable; the south temperate, which, like the north temperate, is habitable; and the southern, which is frigid and uninhabitable, like the northern.[155]

This conception is the basis for his enigmatic statement in *On Genesis* that God divided the light from the darkness 'not only by difference of

150 See n. 20 (below, p. 71).

151 *In Gen.* 1.200 (below, p. 74).

152 *In Gen.* 1.241-48 (below, p. 75).

153 An important exception was Lactantius, who, in the *Divine Institutes* 3.24, ridiculed the notion of the antipodes and a round earth. Augustine echoed Lactantius's ridicule of the antipodes, but carefully avoided taking a stand on the issue of a round vs. a flat earth (*DCD* 16.9). Isidore of Seville also postulated a flat earth in the shape of a circle of lands surrounded by the Ocean (*Etym.* 14.2). For other late antique and early medieval believers in a flat earth, see Robbins, *The Hexaemeral Literature*, pp. 59–61. Bede's belief in a spherical earth is unequivocal (cf. *DNR* 46).

154 In connection with this first section of *On Genesis*, Brown (*Bede the Venerable*, p. 36) comments that Bede's *DNR* 'serves as an introduction to cosmology, a companion to the hexameron (exegesis on the first six days of creation in Genesis)'.

155 Technically, Bede describes five circles of latitude – the Arctic Circle, the Tropic of Cancer, the Equator, the Tropic of Capricorn, and the Antarctic Circle – but his discussion embraces the zones adjacent to them. *DTR* 34 (CCSL 123B, 386–91); *DNR* 9 (CCSL 123A, 199–200).

nature, but also of place, that is to say, by diffusing light in the upper part of the world, in which there was to be human intercourse, and by allowing the lower parts of it to remain in their former darkness'.[156] The implication of this sentence is interesting. Whether the earth is conceived of as a stationary or a revolving sphere, it is almost impossible to avoid imagining it as placed in space with an absolute 'up' and 'down'. From a European perspective, Australia is 'down under'. If Bede visualized the earth as a globe with a particular orientation in space, it seems likely that he would have located the three continents known to him – Europe, Africa, and Asia – on the 'top' of the globe. These would constitute 'the upper part of the world', roughly in the form of a circle of lands, surrounded by the world ocean. At the very centre – the 'topmost' point, as it were – would be the Holy Lands (not the North Pole).[157] In *On the Nature of Things*, he put it this way (borrowing from Pliny and Isidore):

> The whole ring of lands, girded by the Ocean, is divided into three parts: Europe, Asia, and Africa. It takes its starting-point from the West and the Straits of Cadiz, where the Atlantic Ocean bursting forth is poured into the interior seas – for one entering from here Africa is on the right, and Europe is on the left. Of these three parts Asia is comparable in size to the other two. Its boundaries are the rivers Don and Nile. … Therefore Europe is spread out from the west to the north, and Asia from the north through the east as far as the south, and from there Africa is spread out from the south as far as the west.[158]

Thus, if we imagine the Mediterranean as the vertical stroke of a capital T and the Don and the Nile as together forming the horizontal stroke, west would be at the bottom, east at the top, north on the left, and south on the right of our imaginary projection, with Europe in the lower left quadrant, Africa in the lower right, and Asia in the upper two quadrants of the circle of lands. These comprise the habitable regions of the north temperate zone – 'the upper part of the world'. Projected on a flat surface, Bede's description of the circle of lands in *On the Nature of Things* would correspond precisely to the schematic T-O maps of the later Middle Ages, even though it is not certain that he ever saw such a representation.[159]

156 *In Gen.* 1.203-07 (below, p. 74).

157 Bede is vague about the location of paradise. It is somewhere in the far east, not in the modern sense of that phrase, but in the region where the sun first rises over the habitable part of the globe, and it is no longer accessible to man. *In Gen*. 2.288-93; 3.383-86 (below, pp. 149 and 228).

158 *DNR* 51 (CCSL 123A, 233–34).

159 See Wilford, *The Mapmakers*, pp. 45–48; Destombes, *Mappemondes A.D. 1200–1500*, pp. 35–36; Edson, 'World Maps and Easter Tables', pp. 26–30.

God illuminated this upper part on the first day, leaving the lower parts of the world in darkness, because he intended the upper part to be inhabited by mankind. There were, as yet, no heavenly bodies, no sun, no moon, and no stars. Although the south temperate zone in the lower parts of the world was theoretically habitable, by leaving it initially in the dark, God signalled that any lands that might exist beyond the Ocean would be uninhabited. The northern hemisphere was privileged in the act of creation.

Day and night are antecedent to the sun, the moon, and the stars, which were created on the fourth day. The sun illuminates the earth, the moon, and the stars, and also provides the earth with heat. The great size of the sun and the moon is proved by the fact that they do not appear smaller to persons standing farther off. Moreover, since their magnitudes appear to be the same, and the sun is known by the phenomenon of the solar eclipse to be more distant than the moon, it must be greater in size than the moon, since things at a greater distance always appear to be smaller.[160]

These heavenly lights inaugurate not time itself, which began with the words, 'Let light be made', but the measurement of time.[161] Bede was the acknowledged master of the science of time's measurement or *computus*. His textbooks *On Times* (*De Temporibus*) and, above all, *DTR* instructed the Western world. The basis for his interest in this subject is clear. It was the overriding importance of the correct calculation of Easter. Nothing exasperated an earlier generation of Anglican English scholars more than this topic. Even the great Charles Plummer, while alert to many of the reasons for Bede's interest, could not resist exclaiming: 'And yet we cannot help feeling that the question occupies a place in Bede's mind out of all proportion to its real importance'.[162] But, as Benedicta Ward observes, Easter was not 'an arbitrary date but the pivot of the whole cosmos, the central moment when reality was revealed in the face of Jesus Christ'.[163] This insight goes a long way towards explaining why the question remained a live issue for Bede long after the dispute over the Irish and Roman methods of calculation had been resolved and was, in the words of Walter Goffart, 'mere history'.[164] Better than any of his contemporaries, Bede knew the technical details of the *computus*, and Easter was for him both the starting point of history and the core of theology. He was passionately committed to its correct calculation.

160 *In Gen.* 1.468-90 (below, p. 82).
161 *In Gen.* 1.431-43 (below, p. 81).
162 Plummer, *BOH* 1, xl.
163 Ward, *High King of Heaven*, p. 17.
164 Goffart, 'Bede's History in a Harsher Climate', p. 212.

On the fourth day, the day of its creation, 'the sun advancing from due east *consecrated* the vernal equinox at its rising'.[165] The leap from the bare text of Genesis to Bede's interpretation of this event as the inauguration of Easter may seem breathtaking in its apparently gratuitous assertion of unsupported facts. It is nothing of the kind. What is remarkable is the careful adherence of its chain of reasoned assumptions to the most advanced scientific thinking of its time. Let us begin with the days of the week. The week is a period of time established retrospectively, when after the six days of creation, God 'rested' on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2-3). The day of rest is the Sabbath or Saturday. Therefore, working backwards, the first day, when God created light, was a Sunday, and the fourth day must have been a Wednesday.

From the events of the third day, when God commands the earth to bring forth the green herbs and plants (Gen. 1:11-12), we learn that the season of creation was spring: 'It is clear from these words of God that the adornment of the world was accomplished in the springtime, for that is the time when green plants usually appear on earth and trees are usually loaded with fruits'.[166] The first day illuminated by the sun would naturally (in our reconstruction of Bede's thought) be a 'perfect' day of twelve equal hours of daylight and twelve of night. In the upper part of the world (the northern hemisphere), which first received light, the sun would rise precisely in the east on that perfect day, marking the vernal equinox, and continue across the sky for twelve hours. The vernal equinox is the key to the calculation of the date of Easter.

The lesser light, the moon, God made on the fourth day 'to rule the night' (Gen. 1:16). From this, Bede concludes: 'When the full moon appeared in the evening, it prescribed by its first ascent the times which were to be observed in the celebration of Easter'.[167] The moon would naturally be created in its 'perfect' state, that is, full. The full moon can only appear directly opposite the sun. It will rise in the evening in the east as the sun sets in the evening in the west. As Bede explains in the following sentences,

165 *In Gen.* 1.511-13 (below, p. 83). On the importance in Bede's thinking of the equinox as the starting point for all celestial cycles, see Wallis, 'Reframing Bede's "Science"', pp. 82–84.

166 *In Gen.* 1.386-89 (below, p. 79). Jenkins ('Bede as Exegete and Theologian', pp. 171–72) observes of this passage, 'it is natural to see in it the reflection of the English monk on the newborn beauty of an English spring which seems to bring back the glory of Creation itself'.

167 *In Gen.* 1.518-20 (below, p. 83).

Easter is to be celebrated on the Sunday after the first full moon (= the 14th day of the moon) after the vernal equinox.[168] Since sunrise of the fourth day of creation marked the vernal equinox and a full moon appeared that evening, the following Sunday (= the 8th day of creation) would be 'the fit time for celebrating the resurrection of the Lord'.[169]

Once the sun was placed in the heavens its movements marked off the seasons and the years as well as day and night. From its position at noon on the vernal equinox, it daily rose in the sky until it reached its high point at the summer solstice, setting the limits of spring. From there it descended back through the autumnal equinox (summer) to its low point at the winter solstice (autumn), and finally returned to its starting point at the vernal equinox (winter). The entire journey from vernal equinox to vernal equinox made up the solar year of 365 days.[170] In *DTR*, chaps. 36 and 38, where more mathematical precision is required, Bede gives the figure as 365 days and 6 hours. It may seem as though he is 'rounding off' the figure in *On Genesis* for the benefit of an audience untutored in the subtleties of the *computus*. But this is not the case, or at least, not entirely the case. In a profound sense, the proper number of days in a solar year *is* 365. Bede found both the 365-day solar year and the symbolic number 365 embedded in the text of Genesis. According to Genesis 5:23 it is the number of years of Enoch's life. Bede comments: 'The fact that all the days of Enoch are said to be three hundred and sixty-five years, in which number of days the solar year is brought to an end, signifies mystically by the whole period of this age that those who faithfully serve the Lord and strive toward eternal rest will never fail'.[171] Similarly, Bede's knowledge of the Hebrew calendar enabled him, as I point out above, to show that Noah's flood lasted exactly 365 days. 'And Noah was in the ark with the creatures and men who were to be saved through the flood for an entire solar year, because the Lord … not only washes his Church with the water of baptism but also illuminates it with the grace of his Spirit'.[172] When a leap day must be added to bring observation in line with the higher order of truth put forward in the Bible, it is simply not counted in the annual total.

In addition to the sun and the moon, the fourth day saw the creation of the stars, which Bede separates into the fixed stars and the wandering stars or

168 *In Gen.* 1.520–27 (below, p. 83).
169 *In Gen.* 1.524-25 (below, p. 83).
170 *In Gen.* 1.513-18 (below, p. 83).
171 *In Gen.* 2.861-65 (below, p. 166).
172 *In Gen.* 2.1942-46 (below, p. 199).

planets (although Bede doesn't go into the technical details here, his science includes the sun and the moon among the wandering stars). They too mark days and seasons and years. The three outer planets, Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars, describe 'greater years' of 30, 12, and two solar years respectively.[173] Of the inner planets, Bede is here interested only in the moon, whose orbital period is unstated in favour of the observation that twelve of them constitute a 'common year' of 354 days and thirteen an 'embolismic[174] year' of 384 days.[175] These 'years' are not observable phenomena but arbitrary calculations designed to bring the orbits of the sun and the moon into predictable regularity with each other so as to determine and forecast the correct date of Easter.[176]

The fifth day saw the creation of all animals that are associated with the elements of air and water. There were no gaps; all species of birds and fishes came into being at once. Reflecting the experience of a man who spent his entire life near a tidal estuary, Bede observes that these included 'not only creeping and swimming and flying creatures, but also those which, not being adapted for any form of locomotion, cling fast to the rocks, as is the case with many kinds of shellfish'.[177] All these species depend on air for the breath of life and on water. Birds can fly because the air nearest the earth is mixed with water, which supports their flight. Beyond this earthly atmosphere is the *ether*, a purer, more rarefied form of air that extends as far as the firmament, the boundary between the lower and upper heavens, and in which are embedded the sun and the moon and the other planets and stars. Unlike man, who had yet to appear, all animals were created mutable, in the sense that they would either be eaten or die of hunger.

173 The outer planets are those whose spheres are supposed to be above the sun's; the inner planets (Venus, Mercury, and the Moon) are beneath the sun. Cf. Bede, *DNR* 13; *DTR* 8.

174 That is, augmented.

175 The 'common year' is based on a lunar orbit of 29.5 days (354/12 = 29.5).

176 As Bede explains in *DTR* 56, there are 12 common and 7 embolismic years in the 19-year cycle that he employs. The orbits of the sun and the moon are, in fact, incommensurable. To be even approximately useful, the 19-year cycle had to be based on a solar year of 365 and a quarter days. Ultimately, it was, but the transcendent importance of the year of exactly 365 days dictated that all calculations must be based upon it. The combination of twelve common lunar years of 354 days each and seven embolismic lunar years of 384 days each would seem to add up to a total of 6936 days. However, Bede explains that in one of the embolismic years the last day of the embolismic year is also the first day of the next year. Thus, in the 19-year cycle there are only 6935 days, which is exactly 19 × 365. Yet, because of the uncounted leap days in the four or five leap years of the cycle, either 6939 or 6940 days will have elapsed (19 × 365.25 = 6939.75).

177 *In Gen.* 1.617-20 (below, p. 86).

The sixth day brought to a climax the works of creation. First came the animals of and from the earth. And then, in a special act of creation, man was made in the image and likeness of God. Two hierarchies are involved. The first, a descending hierarchy based on the four elements of fire, air, water, and earth, is the sequential creation of the heavenly bodies (fire), the birds and fish (air and water), and the land animals (earth).[178] The inclusion of the heavenly bodies in this sequence suggests that a residual sense of the stars and the planets as living beings may have lingered in Bede's mind. The second, an ascending hierarchy based on the temporal order of appearance of living things on earth, is the sequential creation of plants, fish, birds, animals, and man, with man being given dominion over all creatures below him. This hierarchy, explicit in the Biblical narrative, is the ultimate source of the various forms of evolutionary creationism that are with us today. Every species of plant and animal appeared in its 'perfect shape' and in the maturity of its youthful adult form at once and for all time.[179] The chicken came before the egg. God rested on the seventh day and from that time forward he has never created any new species.[180]

Man differed from the animals in being created immortal and capable of reason. He was created immortal in the sense that if he did not sin, he could not die.[181] His reason, which was significantly mirrored by his upright posture enabling him to contemplate the heavens, linked him with the angels and with God. It was in respect to reason that he was said to have been created 'in the image of God'. Since woman as well as man was created 'in the image of God', woman was likewise endowed with reason.[182] Although parallels to everything he says can be found in his patristic sources, Bede's insistence upon reason as the key not only to what separates man from the animals, but also to what likens him to God, and equally his insistence upon the equality of man and woman in their capacity for reason, is notable for the forthright vigour of its expression. There is no trace of the condescension or downright misogyny that might have been called forth at this point in the Genesis narrative. It is of a piece with his admiring portrait of Abbess Hilda of Streanaeshalch, whose wisdom and counsel were sought by kings and princes and whose monastery gave five bishops to Anglo-Saxon England.[183]

178 Cf. *In Gen.* 1.670–77 (below, p. 88).
179 *In Gen.* 1.394-97 (below, p. 80); 1.1280–87 (p. 107).
180 *In Gen.* 1.1086-88 (below, p. 100).
181 *In Gen.* 1.913-15 (below, p. 95).
182 *In Gen.* 1.837-39 (below, p. 92).
183 Bede, *HE* 4.23.

BEDE'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

On Genesis would not be the first place one might think to look for evidence of the refinements of Bede's religious thought. It is above all a foundational document, as befits the text that it is expounding. But we should, and do, find in it the bases of his devotional practices.[184]

Although Bede probably held much of the text of the Bible in his memory, the Psalms were the fulcrum, the balance-point or link, between the Old and the New Testaments and the most deeply interiorized of all the biblical texts. He would have committed the psalter to memory very early, probably between the age of seven, when he was admitted to Wearmouth as an oblate, and thirteen, when he assisted Abbot Ceolfrith in reciting the psalter, if he was the unnamed little boy who alone with Ceolfrith among the brethren who were capable of reciting the antiphons survived the plague of 686.[185] As in almost all of his writings, quotations from the psalms outnumber all other scriptural references in *On Genesis*.[186] The Bible constituted a vast reservoir of intertextuality, in which every word and phrase, name and number, or situation and event stood in meaningful relationship to similar wording or structural parallels elsewhere in the text and to the self, because it had been so thoroughly internalized. Benedicta Ward describes the process of monastic *ruminatio*, which Bede practised: '"Rumination", the metaphor taken from a cow chewing cud, gives a sense of eating the text, absorbing it physically, of so placing it in the memory that it became part of the physical person'.[187] Bede's own memory was a prodigious storehouse or data bank of scriptural cross-reference that more often than not led through the psalms. His exegesis moves from literal interpretation through a concatenation of related texts and mystical meanings to its ultimate spiritual application to the Christian reader. Spiritual understanding does not emerge from a text in isolation, but only in the context of meditation on its place in the totality of the Scriptures. Bede's method implies that no interpretation is final; every new analysis should lead to fresh understanding.

Noah's flood is the pivotal event of the second book of *On Genesis*. Its

184 On Bede's religious thought and practices, see Carroll, *The Venerable Bede*; Ward, *The Venerable Bede*; Ward, 'Bede and the Psalter'; Ward, *High King of Heaven*; DeGregorio, 'The Venerable Bede on Prayer and Contemplation'; DeGregorio, 'Bede, the Monk, as Exegete'; DeGregorio, 'Affective Spirituality'.

185 The story is told in the anonymous Life of Ceolfrith (*Historia Abbatum auctore Anonymo* 14, ed. Plummer, *BOH* 1, 393).

186 Ward, 'Bede and the Psalter', p. 8 (*BHW*, p. 878).

187 Ward, 'Bede and the Psalter', p. 13 (*BHW*, p. 883).

defining elements in the physical sense might be said to be water and fire. Water is, of course, obvious. But fire? Fire is the element associated with the sun, and Bede makes a point of the fact that the flood lasted one *solar* year. He goes out of his way to emphasize the sun's role. Noah and his family 'were a whole year in the ark, that is, as long as it took for the sun to illuminate all the climatic zones of the world as the zodiac completed its course through the twelve solar months. Thus, just as the water covering the whole globe washed it clean, so the sun, circling the whole globe in the same period of time as though in cooperation with the water, illuminated it with the light of its radiance'.[188] Water was the element of the first great extinction. Fire will be the element of the second, and final, extinction – Last Judgement. The rainbow is the sign of God's promise never again to destroy the earth by water (Gen. 9:13-15). 'But', Bede remarks, 'if it be properly considered, it also sets before our eyes a sign of the future judgement which will come upon the world by fire. For not without reason does it gleam blue and red at the same time, since by the colour blue it bears witness to us of the waters that have gone past, and by the colour red, of the flames that are to come'.[189]

These are fearful words, but they do not stand alone; they are set in a context of hope in which the same two elements are central.[190] The key metaphors are the Sun of Justice (Malach. 4:2) and the Fountain of life (Ps. 35:10 [36:9]), which are Christ: 'And as the Lord is usually referred to figuratively as "the Fountain of life", so also he is called "the Sun of justice" – "the Fountain" because he regenerates, "the Sun" because he illuminates, according to the verse of the Psalmist, *For with you is the fountain of life, and in your light we shall see light*'.[191] Fire and water, again. Water is the element of baptism and fire of spiritual illumination: 'through all the regions of the world [the Lord] not only washes his Church with the water of baptism but also illuminates it with the grace of his Spirit'.[192] Fire brings not only light but heat, love along with illumination. Commenting on Genesis 12:9 ('And Abram went forward, going and proceeding on to the south'), Bede says:

188 *In Gen.* 2.1934-38 (below, p. 199).

189 *In Gen.* 2.2238-43 (below, p. 208).

190 'The exercise of hope is one of the most characteristic features of Bede's commentaries', Carroll, *The Venerable Bede*, p. 217.

191 *In Gen.* 2.1938-42 (below, p. 199). Bede, always alert to wordplay, can surely not have been blind to the providential (as he might have seen it) paronomasia of his native language (*sunu* / *sunne*, Son / sun) in the context of his development of the meaning of 'Sun of justice'.

192 *In Gen.* 2.1944-46 (below, p. 199).

> Truly the southern region, from which the sun, burning more brightly, habitually lights up the world, mystically signifies the ardour of love, whereby the hearts of the elect are enflamed with the *Sun of justice*, namely Christ, always shining down from above … And so Abram … *went forward* with human curiosity, *going and proceeding on to the south*. But on the mystical level he taught that, ascending *from virtue to virtue*, he was always, like all the elect, striving for the uninterrupted benefit of divine love, until it might be granted for him to see *the God of gods in Zion*. (Ps. 83:8 [84:7])[193]

Love and fear are mingled, but love has the upper hand. Scott DeGregorio has shown how Bede anticipated the supposed eleventh-century transition from a 'fear-based' to a 'love-based' devotion in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*.[194] *On Genesis* exhibits the intellectual underpinnings of this aspect of his devotional practice.[195]

As the above quotation illustrates, the idea of *gradus*, the ladder or scale or steps of perfection that the Christian should ascend, is the core of Bede's instruction. Spiritual progress is the goal and it is attainable. In part, his instruction is directed at his fellow monks in the monastic communities of Anglo-Saxon England. In proportion as their profession allowed them the privilege of achieving the highest degree of spiritual perfection, their responsibility was the heaviest. So Bede explicates Genesis 12:5-7 ('… Abram passed through the country into the place of Shechem as far as the noble valley. … And the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, To your seed will I give this land. And he built there an altar to the Lord'):

> And since the sacred narrative is full of allegorical mysteries, it should be noted that this appearance of the Lord and erection of an altar is said to have occurred in the *place of Shechem* and in the *noble valley*. What figurative meaning is to be understood for 'noble valley' other than humility? We who have been called from the labours and burdens of this world must consider this to be first among the virtues, as he himself says, *Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light* [Matt. 11:29-30]. The place of Shechem corresponds mystically to the carrying of this burden, because it is named together with the noble valley. Indeed Shechem is translated in Latin as *humeri*, 'shoulders', because it is fitting for us to take

193 *In Gen.* 3.1103-13 (below, p. 250); similarly, *In Gen.* 3.1217-18 (p. 253); *In Gen.* 4.602-09 (p. 289).

194 DeGregorio, 'Affective Spirituality', pp. 130–31.

195 Bede's Commentary on the Song of Songs (among the shortest books of the Bible) is one of the longer of his Old Testament commentaries. It is a curious fact, which may reflect a difference in basic aims, that Bede never quotes the Song of Songs in *On Genesis*.

> up the burden of good works that we ought to carry with *humility* of mind.[196] Whenever we take particular care to do this, we will immediately merit receiving the grace of the Lord's presence and consolation, so that little by little we may be able to climb to the higher steps of the virtues.[197]

'We', of course, are the monks and the 'noble valley' is fairly obviously intended to be taken as a reference to the monastic enclosure.

The ascent is difficult. Bede goes on, explicating Genesis 13:3-4 (Abram returned 'to the place where before he had pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai, in the place of the altar which he had made before, and he called upon the name of the Lord'):

> the blessed Abram, figuratively allegorizing by his journey the progress of the elect, is said to have returned to Bethel … But the text adds that he did not enter the city, but that he reached a point between it and Ai, where he is said to have called upon the Lord. This place of prayer is reported above [Gen. 12:8] to have been located on a mountain, because the elect, who are still held fast by the bonds of the flesh and located in the path of progress of the virtues, are certainly hard pressed to come to the house of the celestial habitation even with the whole effort of their minds, yet they exert themselves to hasten toward it with uninterrupted steps of good works. But they cannot yet either enter it or discern its citizens and its King in their beauty. But between receiving the faith, whereby they are consecrated to the Lord, and entering the kingdom, in which they long to see him, they climb the height of good work like the middling peak of an extraordinary mountain.[198]

Bede may have written this too with his fellow monks primarily in mind, but in the end the democracy of the elect guarantees that his message is for everyone and applies equally to all. The ascent begins with faith, baptism, and instruction in the mysteries of Christ's Incarnation and is carried on by the performance of good works in a spirit of humility. No one is barred by his or her station or lack of learning from making the ascent.

THE TWO VERSIONS OF *ON GENESIS*

Bede issued *On Genesis* in two different versions. The first and much shorter is a commentary in two books (which will be referred to as Ia and Ib) on the first three chapters of Genesis. He prefaced this work with a dedicatory

196 Notice the complex association of carrying a burden on one's shoulders with humility. Etymological wordplay is part of the allegorical interpretive process.

197 *In Gen.* 3.1071-86 (below, p. 249).

198 *In Gen.* 3.1235-48 (below, pp. 253–54).

epistle to Bishop Acca in which he promised that he would return to Genesis after commenting on 'the book of the holy prophet and priest Ezra'.[199] Some years later, he fulfilled his promise by combining the two books of the shorter version (Ia + Ib) into a single book (book 1) and adding another three books (books 2–4) of commentary on Genesis, chapters 4–21. It was this longer version to which he specifically referred when he included *On Genesis* in the list of his writings in *HE* 5.24.

There is no dispute about these two versions of *On Genesis*. However, Charles W. Jones speculated that Bede composed Ia of the shorter version in the period 703–709, before Acca became bishop, and long before he composed Ib, and that at some point he issued Ia independently.[200] Jones, therefore, speaks of three recensions of *On Genesis*: the 'first recension' being Ia; the 'second recension' Ia + Ib; and the 'third recension' books 1–4. In coming to this judgement, Jones was influenced by the pronounced difference in content between Ia and Ib. As he puts it: 'Ia is a careful digest of patristic hexaëmera …, culminating in a rhetorical and figurative flourish, his treatment of the typical Six Days. It is a personal and original composition. In contrast, Ib is merely a *collectaneum*, derived overwhelmingly from Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*, largely word for word. Especially from Gen. ii, 25 (i, 1865) Bede seems in a panic of haste, copying beginnings of chapters from Augustine rather (it seems) at random'.[201] Following his lead, scholars have accepted a *terminus ad quem* of 709 for Ia.[202]

In all probability, however, Jones's 'first recension' (Ia) is nothing more than an unauthorized, truncated form of the 'second recension' (or shorter version), Ia + Ib.[203] It is certainly true that Ia is different in character from Ib. Ia is in the classic form of a *hexaemeron* – a detailed exposition of the works of the first six days of creation and the seventh day of rest. Bede devotes nearly 11,000 words of commentary to the 584 words of the printed Vulgate text of Gen. 1:1–2:3. However, I cannot agree with Jones's assessment that 'Bede seems in a panic of haste' in Ib. Certainly, Bede relies more heavily on Augustine in this section (*In Gen*. 1.1865-2316) than elsewhere, but it is far

199 *In Gen*. Preface 35-37 (below, p. 66). This anticipatory promise to extend the commentary perhaps explains why Bede did not feel it necessary to write a new preface for the longer version of *On Genesis.*

200 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., pp. viii–ix.

201 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., pp. vii–viii.

202 E.g., Brown, *Bede the Venerable*, p. 52; DeGregorio, 'The Reforming Impulse of Bede's Later Exegesis', pp. 110–11 and nn. 16–17.

203 Gorman ('Commentary on the Pentateuch, second part', p. 303) reaches a similar conclusion.

from the random collection of quotations that Jones's words suggest. A careful perusal will show that all of Ib, including this section, is a coherent analysis of the nature and psychology of the Fall, much of it in Bede's own words. It is a necessary counterweight to the narrative of creation that Bede commented upon in Ia. If God's creation is supremely good, as Bede insists in Ia, then an explanation for its corruption necessarily must follow. Ib is Bede's theodicy. Bede obviously found Augustine's psychosexual approach to the problem compelling, and he drew upon it extensively, but he made it his own.

Jones points out that 'Ia centers in the problems of the nature of the physical world, chronology, and paschal types and calculations, especially the type of the Six Days. While verbally holding close to acceptable patristic sources…, the statements in Ia conform with Bede's didactic interests as seen in *De Temporibus*, *De Natura Rerum*, and the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, all composed before the year 708'.[204] These facts led Jones to think of another work from that time: 'I suggest that Ia was prepared in that period in which Bede composed his commentary on the Apocalypse, which Laistner *on rather fragile evidence* set A.D. 703–709. It is in line with Bede's early addiction to the beginning and ending of things that *his first Scriptural commentaries* should center in Creation and Last Judgment [my italics]'.[205] By grouping Ia of *On Genesis* with the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* as Bede's 'first Scriptural commentaries', Jones has allowed speculation to harden into fact. Such are the grounds on which he tentatively assigned Ia to the years 703–709.

The dedicatory epistle to Bishop Acca is prefixed to all the manuscripts in both the shorter and longer versions.[206] Its wording does not vary, and it is clear that it was written specifically for the shorter version (Ia + Ib), since Bede says: 'And I have carried through the work up to the point where Adam, having been ejected from the *paradise of pleasure*, entered the exile of this temporal life [i.e., the end of Ib]'.[207] If Ia were composed as a unit at an earlier date, it must have been tacked on to the freshly composed Ib and its dedicatory letter. But, if Bede issued Ia separately, presumably before he composed the letter to Acca, how is it that the dedicatory letter is also

204 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. vii.

205 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. viii. Laistner's statement about Bede's *Commentary on the Apocalypse* is: 'This, in all probability, is the earliest of Bede's Biblical commentaries. Dedicated to Hwaetbert before he became abbot in 716, it was completed before the *Commentary on Acts* which in its final form cannot be much later than 709. We may therefore safely assume a date between 703 and 709 for its composition' (*Hand-List*, p. 25).

206 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., pp. vi–vii.

207 *In Gen.* Preface 33-35 (below, p. 66).

prefixed to the manuscripts that contain Ia only?

This question, at least in part, must have prompted Jones to propose that Ia was still 'unpublished' when the shorter version (Ia + Ib) was made public. He gives another reason, however, for making this claim: 'Book I, lines 824-829, indicate to me that Bede had not "published" Ia at any time before he sent it to Acca, for those lines seem to be composed in conjunction with Ib'.[208] Jones implies that Bede must have inserted these lines into the previously written Ia at the time when he wrote Ib to explain why in the latter work he will have more to say on the subject of the creation of Adam and Eve. It is notorious that there are two separate accounts of human creation in Genesis, a shorter (Gen. 1:26-27) and a longer one (Gen. 2:7-23), which modern scholarship attributes to the imperfect blending of two narrative traditions (P and J).[209] When Bede comes to the shorter account, he remarks, in the lines to which Jones refers: 'It is explained more fully in what follows [i.e., in the longer account, Gen. 2:7-23] whence and how God made the first man and woman. But now [in the shorter account, Gen. 1:26-27] for the sake of brevity they are only reported to have been created, so that the work of the sixth day and the consecration of the seventh along with other matters may be expounded; and thus, as occasion demands, both this and other things that have been omitted but are worthy of mention may be spoken of more freely'.[210] This is Bede's justification for the fact that a second, more extensive, account of the creation of mankind is yet to come in Genesis. It is true that the wording of his final clause is ambiguous – it is not certain whether Bede means that the things 'that have been omitted' in one or another passage of the Bible 'may be spoken of more freely' elsewhere in Scripture, or in commentary by himself. It hardly matters; a good example of Bede commenting on something that has been omitted can be found in the remaining portion of his exposition of Gen. 1:27 (lines 829-52), which is still in Ia. In short, Bede's remarks are appropriate whether or not he intended to go on past Gen. 2:3. There is no need to speculate that they were interpolated. But if they were not interpolated, the argument can be turned on its head: though the lines *might* apply *only* to the remainder of Ia, they are most appropriate on the assumption that when Bede wrote them he fully intended to go on to Gen. 2:7-23 and beyond, that is, to Ib.

208 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., pp. viii–ix.

209 See above, n. 32. Alter (*The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 141–47) argues for an understanding of the complex artistry of the blended narratives, which are placed 'in dynamically complementary sequence' (p. 141).

210 *In Gen.* 1.824-29 (below, p. 92).

Whenever Ia and Ib were written, they were probably written within a short time of each other. I find it hard to believe that Bede could have composed Ia in 703–709 and Ib fifteen or more years later, ca. 725, as Jones proposes,[211] and then write to Acca: 'But because these [patristic commentaries on Genesis] are so copious…, it pleased your holiness to place the duty upon me to gather from all these…those things which would seem sufficient for the needs of the weak. *I have not been tardy* in carrying out what you deigned to command, but rather, after thoroughly perusing the volumes of the fathers, I *immediately* selected from them, and *arranged in two books* [i.e. Ia and Ib], those things which could instruct a still inexperienced reader… [my italics]'.[212] Surely, Bede would have expressed himself differently had there been a gap of the order of fifteen years between his work on Ia and Ib! A period of one or, at the outside, two years for the composition of the two parts is conceivable. Anything beyond that begins to stretch the limits of our normal understanding of phrases such as 'I have not been tardy' and 'I immediately selected'.

Nor does it serve any useful purpose to suppose that Bede issued Ia as a separate work *after* publishing Ia + Ib. The simplest explanation appears to be that at some point after the publication of the shorter version, someone who was interested only in a *hexaemeron* ordered a copy to be made of Ia. What we have in the manuscripts that survive are full and abbreviated copies of the shorter version of *On Genesis*.

In summary: Ia (= *In Gen.* 1.1–1224) is Bede's commentary on Gen. 1:1–2:3, the account of the first seven days of Creation. Commentaries on the Creation were common in the patristic period and were often called *hexaemera* (referring to the Works of the Six Days). But Bede extended his commentary as far as the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise (Gen. 3:24). It ends at *In Gen.* 1.2316 (lines 1225–2316 = Ib). Although not technically a *hexaemeron*, it still falls loosely within the tradition of commentaries on the beginning of Genesis.[213] Bede issued this work in two books (Ia + Ib) with a Preface to Acca. It is the shorter version of *On Genesis*.

After an interval of several years, Bede returned to this work and enormously expanded its scope, taking it up to another expulsion – this one Abraham's driving of Hagar and Ishmael into the desert at the insistence of his wife Sarah (Gen. 21:10). Keeping the original Preface to Acca, he combined the two books of the first edition (Ia and Ib) with an additional

211 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. viii.

212 *In Gen.* Preface 18-29 (below, p. 66).

213 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. vii.

quotation from St Augustine (lines 2316-32) into a new book 1 and then composed three additional books. The expanded commentary in four books is the longer version of *On Genesis*.

RETHINKING THE DATE(S) OF *ON GENESIS*

We have no definitive grounds for precisely dating either version of *On Genesis*. I tentatively propose ca. 717–718 for the shorter version (Ia + Ib); ca. 720 for the composition of book 2 of the longer version; and ca. 722–725 for books 3–4.

Bede appended to his *Ecclesiastical History* (731) a list of his writings. He begins that list with his biblical commentaries. Because he lists the commentaries in roughly the order they appear in the Bible, *On Genesis* takes pride of place: *In principium Genesis, usque ad natiuitatem Isaac et eiectionem Ismahelis, libros IIII*, 'The beginning of Genesis up to the birth of Isaac and the casting out of Ishmael: four books'.[214] As we have seen, both versions of *On Genesis* are dedicated to 'Bede's close personal friend',[215] Bishop Acca of Hexham, who was installed in office in 709 and deposed in 731.[216] Thus it is logical to place the composition of both versions some time in the period 709–731.[217]

A. *Jones vs. Plummer*

My dating is at variance with the chronology that Jones proposed in 1967: 'we must, I think, assume that Bede composed Ia at some time before A.D. 725, Ib immediately before or after 725, and the present Books II–IV after he had composed *In Esdram*, but before A.D. 731'.[218] Before Jones's revised

214 *HE* 5.24 (Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 566–67).

215 Blair, 'Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and its Importance Today', p. 11 (*BHW*, p. 29).

216 As recorded in Continuations (annals) from the Moore MS (Colgrave and Mynors, p. 572). See Bede's encomium of Acca in *HE* 5.20. For more on Acca, see Blair, *The World of Bede*, pp. 189–90; Kirby, 'Bede, Eddius Stephanus and the *Life of Wilfrid*', pp. 107–108; Whitelock, 'Bede and his Teachers and Friends', pp. 26–27; Bolton, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature*, pp. 202–204. Goffart ('Bede's History in a Harsher Climate', pp. 218–20) casts doubt on Bede's personal friendship with Acca, and argues that 'Bede's letter to Ecgberht implicitly classes Acca as one of the unworthy churchmen of the recent past' (at p. 219).

217 As Plummer (*BOH* 1, p. cxlix) points out.

218 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. viii. As I point out above, Jones actually believed that Ia was composed ca. 703–709, and the implication of the last clause, of course, is that *On Ezra* belongs to the period 725–730.

chronology swept the field, scholars generally accepted Charles Plummer's claim that *On Genesis* was probably written in 720, a claim on which my dating ultimately depends.

Plummer assigned *On Genesis* to 720 on the basis of Bede's argument in book 2 about the duration of Noah's flood.[219] In order to demonstrate that the flood lasted for exactly one solar year, Bede offers this illustration: 'If… the seventeenth day of the moon fell today on the calends of April [April 1]…'.[220] After quoting these words, Plummer argued: 'In his chronological works Bede takes his examples from the actual year in which he is writing. It is therefore probable that he is doing the same here; if so, this criterion would fix it to the year 720, which would suit very well'.[221] One might suppose that Bede is referring to the seventeenth day of the second month of the Hebrew lunar calendar, which is the date given in Gen. 7:11. However, the second Hebrew month is Iyar, 'which we call May', as Bede points out in his comment on that verse,[222] and the seventeenth of Iyar never occurs as early as April 1. Although Bede obviously takes the number 17 from the Genesis text, he does not specify a Hebrew month for the seventeenth day of the moon. The only Hebrew month in which the seventeenth day can fall on April 1 is Nisan (the 'first month'); within the limits 709–731, it could have done so, according to Bede's 532-year paschal table, only in the year AD 720.[223] This calculation, then, was the basis for Plummer's calculation.

Laistner accepted Plummer's conclusion, though he noted that *On Genesis* grew out of 'an earlier and much briefer exposition of the first three chapters of Genesis'.[224] Jones, however, rejected Plummer's argument for the year 720. In the end, as I argue in detail in Appendix 1, I do not believe his reasons for doing so stand up to close scrutiny. Of course, the fact that Jones's dismissal of Plummer's argument is not (to my mind) persuasive does not prove beyond a doubt that Bede was writing in that year. But it can be said that there are *probable* grounds for concluding that Bede composed the latter part of book 2 in the year 720, and chose the seventeenth day of the moon on April 1 because it worked better than any other for his

219 For which, see above, pp. 6–8.

220 *In Gen.* 2.1929-32 (below, p. 198).

221 Plummer, *BOH* 1, p. cxlix (Plummer's claim is based on a calculation supplied to him by T. A. Archer).

222 *In Gen.* 2.1521-26 (below, p. 186).

223 Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, Appendix 2, p. 396. Bede's table does not mention the Hebrew months. It gives the date of the fourteenth day of the moon according to the Julian calendar, which in the year 720 fell on March 29.

224 Laistner, *Hand-List*, p. 41.

purpose.[225] This in turn would suggest that the shorter version of *On Genesis* was written some time before 720.

B. *On Ezra, the Codex Amiatinus, and the Crisis of 716*

What of Jones's postulated dates, ca. 725 for Ib, and after *On Ezra* but before 731 for books 2–4? These are based on inferences from what Bede says to Acca, from what was known or could be guessed about the date of *On Ezra*, and from Bede's statements in the *Ecclesiastical History*.

The chain of inferences goes like this: In the dedicatory epistle, which was written to accompany Ib, Bede tells Acca that he will return to Genesis after writing a commentary on Ezra. The commentary *On Ezra*, which he did write, contains a clear reference to *DTR*. *DTR* was written in 725, and *On Ezra* appears in the list of Bede's works in the *Ecclesiastical History*, which was completed in 731. Therefore, *On Ezra* belongs to the period after 725 and before 731; and therefore Ib must have been written shortly before or after 725. Then, some time after *On Ezra*, but again before 731, Bede returned to Genesis and composed books 2–4, which together with Ia and Ib became the longer version (Jones's 'Recension 3').

Of course, if book 2 was composed in 720, as argued above and in Appendix 1, this chain of reasoning is flawed. One of its weaknesses is that it does not allow for the vagaries of composition and publication. Bede might have laboured over a book for a period of years (as we know he did on *DTR*). He might have worked on more than one book at a time. He might have made a cross-reference to a book he had not yet completed. He might have interrupted work on one book to work on another (as he tells us he did with *On Genesis* to work on *On Ezra*). And, of course, Bede's plans for the future, as announced in the Preface to Acca, might have gone awry – not seriously, because we know he did write a commentary on Ezra and he did come back to Genesis, but perhaps enough to require some of these dates to be adjusted.

Let us consider the circumstances that might have prompted Bede to interrupt *On Genesis* to take up writing the commentary on Ezra.[226] The

225 There was also a seventeenth day of the moon in 720 on February 1, but that would not have suited his purpose because the leap-day in that month would have brought the total to 366 days. On May 1 of 720 the moon was in its eighteenth day.

226 'Interrupt' is perhaps misleading. Bede brought the shorter version of *On Genesis* to a close at a significant juncture – the exile of Adam and Eve from the paradise of pleasure. There is no sense of incompletion, and we may assume he authorized its release as a finished

chronologies of the two works are intertwined. Unfortunately, Bede does not offer any explanation for his temporary shift of interest. He merely states, in his prefatory epistle to Acca, 'I shall write some things also about subsequent events of the sacred narrative, God willing, with the attendant help of your intercession, after I first investigate, however inadequately, the book of the holy prophet and priest Ezra'.[227] In the brief prologue to *On Ezra*, which is also addressed to Acca (although without a formal salutation and closing), his language allows us to believe that it was Acca who ordered him to turn his attention to Ezra and Nehemiah: 'And so, most reverend Bishop Acca, complying diligently with your exhortations, I have put my effort into considering this volume'.[228] If it were truly the case that Acca was directing Bede's writing programme, then we would have to shift the question to ask why Acca was suddenly interested in Ezra. It seems more likely, however, that Acca was pleased to invite Bede to carry out what he already knew to be Bede's intentions.[229]

Paul Meyvaert has traced Bede's interest in the historical figure of Ezra to his involvement with the Codex Amiatinus, the most outstanding surviving witness of Jerome's Latin Vulgate, which was produced in the scriptoria of Wearmouth-Jarrow.[230] The story that Meyvaert weaves has all the fascination of first-rate detective fiction. Like so many good mysteries it has a double-plot. As Meyvaert tells it, Bede takes the role of Holmes (or perhaps Meyvaert plays Eco to Bede's William of Baskerville). Only a good murder is lacking.

During a visit to Rome in 679–680 with Benedict Biscop, Abbot Ceolfrith, who was at that time prior of Wearmouth, acquired an Old-Latin pandect, or complete text of the Bible, which he brought back to the Wearmouth-Jarrow community. Neither he nor the community were aware that this was

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document. He then took up the theme of *return* from exile in *On Ezra*. Finally (if this is indeed the order of composition), he brought out the longer version of *On Genesis*, ending with a second exile – that of Hagar and Ishmael.

227 *In Gen.* Preface 35-37 (below, p. 66).

228 Bede, *In Ezram*, Prol. 10–12 (trans. DeGregorio, *On Ezra*, p. 1).

229 Whitelock ('Bede and his Teachers and Friends', p. 29) points out 'that it was a modesty convention for an author to declare that he had undertaken a work at the request of others'. Cf. Blair's comments on the role of Abbot Albinus of St Augustine's monastery in Canterbury in encouraging Bede to undertake the *Ecclesiastical History*. 'Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and its Importance Today', p. 6 (*Bede and his World*, p. 24).

230 Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus', pp. 827–83; see also Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament*, pp. 85–139.

the so-called Codex Grandior prepared by Cassiodorus at Vivarium.[231] The old pandect provided a model for the three new pandects of the Vulgate that Ceolfrith ordered to be made at Wearmouth-Jarrow, including the Codex Amiatinus. Among the features of the Codex Grandior was apparently an untitled portrait page of Cassiodorus seated before a cupboard in which were displayed nine volumes of books of the Bible.[232] The illustrator of the Codex Amiatinus turned this into a portrait of the scribe and priest, Ezra, dressed as a high-priest or *pontifex*.

I will pass over the chain of detection uncovered by Meyvaert that led Bede (or his community) to identify the old pandect as the Codex Grandior of Cassiodorus, and focus on this portrait of Ezra. Here is yet another mystery, or set of mysteries. Why Ezra? What made the community think of Ezra when it looked at the Cassiodorus portrait? What has Ezra to do with the production of the new pandects?[233] We know it is Ezra in the Codex Amiatinus because an elegiac couplet above the portrait tells us so:

> *Codicibus sacris hostili clade perustis*
> *Esdra Deo feruens hoc reparavit opus.*
> (After the sacred texts had been burned up by enemy action,
> Ezra, ardent for God, restored this work.)

Bede was almost certainly the author of these verses. Meyvaert points to a number of verbal parallels in various of Bede's works. The most compelling is the phrase *hostili clade perustae*, which appears in book 2 of his commentary *On Ezra* (lines 774-75 [CCSL 119A, 307]).[234]

The event to which Bede refers in the couplet is the story of Ezra's restoration of the Hebrew canon of Scripture following its loss in the destruction of Jerusalem, which is related in the apocryphal second book of Esdras (4 Ezra 14:18-47). Bede twice refers to this story in *On Genesis* as well as in three of his other commentaries.[235] Meyvaert believes that the 'enigma' of the Cassiodorus portrait would have provoked intense interest at Wearmouth-Jarrow

231 That Ceolfrith's pandect was the Codex Grandior is a hypothesis supported by circumstantial evidence, not an absolute fact. Gorman ('The Codex Amiatinus', pp. 866–67) indeed calls it a 'legend'. But the hypothesis has a high degree of probability and it has been generally accepted.

232 Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus', p. 872.

233 Bruce-Mitford ('The Art of the Codex Amiatinus', p. 14 [*BHW*, p. 202]) assumes that Cassiodorus was 'depicted in the guise of Ezra' in the Codex Grandior.

234 Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus', p. 877, and nn. 199–202.

235 See *In Gen.* Preface 40–41, and note (below, pp. 66–67).

in deciphering the image and the meaning of its placement in the Codex Grandior. He hazards the guess that the script of the open book held in the lap of the seated 'scribe' might have resembled, or made the community think of, Tyronian notation. 'This may have been the element that set the metamorphosis into motion, a process in which Bede's practical detective flair possibly played some part'.[236] Meyvaert goes on: 'In the Old Testament book that bears his name, Ezra is eight times referred to as *scriba* and once as *scriba uelox in lege Mosi* (Ezra 7.6)'.[237] He then quotes Bede's comment on the latter phrase in his commentary *In Reges*: 'For Judea was destroyed by the Chaldeans and the library gathered of old was consumed by the enemy's fire along with the rest of the wealth of the province, from which a few books that are now contained in Holy Scripture were afterwards restored by the industry of the high-priest and prophet Ezra. Hence it is written of him, "This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses"[238] –"ready," that is to say, because he invented a more rapid script than the Hebrews had up to that time'.[239] With this information in mind, Bede could deduce that the seated figure of a 'scribe' with an open book displaying what appeared to be a kind of shorthand script in the Codex Grandior was Ezra. This reasoning begins to suggest why the portrait would have been considered appropriate for placement in the Codex Amiatinus before the books of the Old Testament. Ezra is given the garments and insignia of a high-priest and a halo as a type of Christ.[240]

Admittedly, this is speculation of the boldest kind, but one feels that it, or something very like it, could well lie behind Bede's interest in Ezra. Abbot Ceolfrith abruptly departed for Rome in June 716, taking the Codex Amiatinus with him as a present for the Pope. This fact gives us a *terminus ad quem* for the Ezra portrait (and all the thinking that went into the decision

236 Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus', p. 873.

237 Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus', pp. 873–74.

238 Ezra/1 Esdras 7.6.

239 *Vastata namque a Chaldaeis Iudaea et bibliotheca est antiquitus congregata inter alias prouinciae opes hostili igne consumpta ex qua pauci qui nunc in sancta scriptura continentur libri postmodum Ezrae pontificis et prophetae sunt industria restaurati. Vnde scriptum est de eo, 'Ascendit Ezras de Babilone et ipse scriba uelox in lege Moysi', uelox uidelicet quia promptiores litterarum figuras quam eatenus Hebraei habebant repperit …* . Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus', p. 874, from Bede, *In Reges* 7.17-24 (CCSL 119, 301–302) (my translation). A similar comment appears in *In Ezram* 2.791-96 and 813-17 (CCSL 119A, 307–308). Bede refers to Ezra's restoring Holy Scripture in *In Sam.* 2.522-28 (CCSL 119, 80).

240 Meyvaert, 'Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus', pp. 874–75.

to include it) and the couplet that Bede wrote to accompany it. It also gives us a plausible context for the sudden interest in Ezra that he expresses in his prefatory epistle to Acca. If thinking about the 'scribe' in the Codex Grandior led him to the scribe Ezra, and study of the book of Ezra[241] gave him the idea of associating the scribe Ezra's new script with the script on the book in the Cassiodorus portrait, then this would seem a likely time for him to decide to find a suitable place to break off his work on Genesis and turn his attention to Ezra – a book that had never received a full commentary.[242] Certainty is not to be had, but a period of time around 716 would accord well with what we know and can plausibly guess of the composition of the shorter version of *On Genesis*.

But was it before or after Ceolfrith caused an upheaval at Wearmouth-Jarrow by his abrupt and unannounced departure for Rome with the Codex Amiatinus in June 716? Bede was labouring over his commentary on 1 Samuel when Ceolfrith declared his intention to leave. Like *On Genesis*, this commentary is dedicated to Bishop Acca. In the prologue, which reads as though it were written before rather than after the completion of the work, Bede distinguishes between two types of Old Testament prophets: those, like Jeremiah and Isaiah, who foretold future events, and those like Samuel, Jonas, and Ezra, who wrote of the past. Since they all wrote for our instruction, Bede says, we ought to strive not to let what they wrote escape our notice through our neglect.[243] Bede was not shy about referring to his own work. Nothing in what he says here encourages us to believe that he had yet written *On Ezra*. In the Preface to book 4 of *On I Samuel*, Bede says he had completed the first three books when the news of Ceolfrith's departure filled him with *inopinata mentis anxietas*, 'an unexpected anxiety of mind', that took away his wonted *meditandi uel scribendi uoluptate*, 'pleasure of meditating and writing', for some extended, but unspecified, period of time. Then, after the election of young Hwætberht as the new abbot and his confirmation by Bishop Acca, which also took place in 716, Bede says he recovered his peace of mind and with it his love of writing, and he promises Acca that he will soon communicate a fourth book of the allegorical interpretation of 1 Samuel.[244] Although Ezra was demonstrably on his mind when he wrote the prologue to *On I Samuel* before the crisis, it seems probable

241 Bede and the Middle Ages generally regarded Ezra and Nehemiah together as one book.

242 DeGregorio, *On Ezra*, Introduction, pp. xv, xxii.

243 *In Sam.*, Prol. 10–18 (CCSL 119, 9).

244 *In Sam.* 4.1-28 (CCSL 119, 212).

from what was said above that he had not begun his commentary on it when Ceolfrith departed in 716. Therefore, I think it more likely than not that Bede's prefatory epistle to Acca in *On Genesis*, where he declares his intention to comment on Ezra, belongs, with the whole of the shorter version, to the post-crisis period of, say, 717–718.

Bede was what the modern world, in the derogatory way it has of viewing extraordinary accomplishment, likes to call a 'workaholic'. His habits included working on several projects at the same time, interrupting one work to begin another,[245] and, what is much the same, going back and forth between two or more works. It could take him years to bring a work to completion.[246] He sometimes issued revised or enlarged editions of earlier works.[247] This may help us to understand the apparently contradictory dating indicators of *On Genesis* and *On Ezra*.

Even if we accept the proposition that Bede could have brought out the shorter version of *On Genesis* ca. 717–718, with the implication that he began work on *On Ezra* at that time, and allow that he could have been working on book 2 of *On Genesis* in 720, we need not argue that he must have completed *On Ezra* in the interval between these dates. He may have worked first on one and then on the other over a number of years. We have nearly firm evidence that he had not completed *On Ezra* in 725, because in book 3 of that work he refers to a fuller discussion in *DTR* of the seventy prophetic weeks of the prophet Daniel,[248] and completion of *DTR* is securely dated to 725.[249] I conclude that there are grounds for believing that Bede

245 As he did with *On Genesis*.

246 From internal evidence, we know that Bede was working on *DTR* in 722, and that he completed it in 725. Ray ('What Do We Know about Bede's Commentaries?', p. 6, n. 6) adduces evidence for extended periods of composition for Bede's *In Cant.* and *De locis sanctis*.

247 *DTR* is a greatly enlarged and revised version of *De temporibus*. As we have seen, there were two editions of *On Genesis*.

248 *De qua tota prophetae sententia plenissime prout potui disserere in temporum libro curaui*, 'I took pains to treat very fully to the best of my ability all the prophet's meaning in my book on Time'. *In Ezram* 3.155-57 (CCSL 119A, 342–43). Meyvaert ('The Date of Bede's *In Ezram*', p. 1093) speculates that this sentence was an interpolation: 'Several years after completing *In Ezram* Bede composed his *DTR*, at which point he added a marginal note in his commentary on Ezra directing the reader to the fuller treatment in chapter 9 of the work on time. With further copies of *In Ezram* this marginal note became absorbed into the main text'. In general, appeals to interpolation to eliminate inconvenient pieces of evidence are hazardous. I am not convinced by Meyvaert's argument.

249 Jones, *BOT*, p. 136. The discussion in *DTR* to which Bede refers is found in chap. 9, which presumably was written before the passage in chap. 11 that he wrote in 722. It is therefore possible that Bede was referring to a work that he had not yet published, which would require us to advance the not-yet-completed date of *On Ezra* to ca. 722.

worked intermittently on *On Ezra* following the completion of the shorter version of *On Genesis* ca. 717–718, and that he may not have finished it until after 725.[250] Scott DeGregorio's judgement is 'that the majority of our evidence at present favours a later date for [*On Ezra*], placing the bulk of its composition somewhere…in the latter half of the 720s'.[251] If this is so, and if Bede went back to commenting on Genesis in 720, there is no reason to assert that the longer version of *On Genesis* in its entirety must postdate *On Ezra*. There is an abrupt shift in usage from *antiqua* to *uetus* that occurs between books 2 and 3, which suggests the possibility of some interval of time between the composition of these two books.[252] Nevertheless, even with his ability to work on several projects at once, much of Bede's time between 725 and 731 must have been occupied in gathering materials for and composing the *Ecclesiastical History*, and I see little to be gained by insisting that the bulk of composition of *On Genesis* belongs to this late period when he was busy with so much else.[253] Ca. 722–725 seems a plausible estimate for books 3–4.[254]

To recapitulate, I propose ca. 717–718 for the shorter version of *On Genesis* (Ia + Ib); 720 for book 2; and ca. 722–725 for books 3–4. But it must be emphasized again that these dates are conjectural.

JONES'S EDITION OF *ON GENESIS* AND THE PRESENT TRANSLATION

On Genesis has never before been translated into English. My translation is based on the Latin text edited in 1967 for the Corpus Christianorum by Charles W. Jones (page references to the Latin text are inserted into the translation between virgules, e.g., **/37/**; cross-references, which are found in the footnotes, give the line numbers to Jones's edition followed by the

250 I cannot accept Meyvaert's latest suggestion of '711 to 715': see his 'The Date of Bede's *In Ezram*', pp. 1096–97.

251 DeGregorio, *On Ezra*, p. xlii.

252 See below, p. 56.

253 In addition to the *Ecclesiastical History*, Laistner dates the following works with varying degrees of probability to the period 725–731: the *Retraction* (of Acts), the *Commentary on Ezra*, the *Lives of the Abbots*, the Epistle to Wicthede (for the date of which, see Jones, *BOT*, p. 138), *On the Temple*, and *On Tobias* (*Hand-List*, pp. 20, 39, 75, 78, 94, 112).

254 DeGregorio ('The Reforming Impulse of Bede's Later Exegesis', pp. 110–11 and nn. 16–17) dates book 4 to ca. 725. Concerning book 4, Jones (Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., pp. ix–x) observes, 'The reference to the Saracens (iv, 250–256) suggests a date after A.D. 721, when they established themselves across the Pyrenees at Narbonne'.

relevant page numbers of this book). Jones used as his copy text the 1717 edition of Dom Edmond Martène, with the observation: 'that preeminent scholar's edition is excellent, and I have been guided by his judgment. As the variants…indicate, changes which I have made from his basic text are comparatively minor'.[255] These changes were made on the basis of his collation of all or parts of twelve of the eighteen manuscripts of whose existence he was aware.

Jones remarks that 'Martène's text was copied without change by J. A. Giles…, and by Abbé J. P. Migne'.[256] For its part, Jones's text is generally reliable, but there are a few misprints and in some instances what appear to be inferior readings.[257] In these cases, I have preferred the reading that seemed to give the best sense. Where my translation is based on a reading that differs from Jones's, I have recorded the fact in Appendix 2, with a reference to Martène, Giles, Migne, and/or, by Jones's sigla, to the relevant manuscript(s).

Jones thoroughly investigated Bede's sources for *On Genesis*. There are some few inevitable oversights and mis-attributions, which I have sought to remedy to the best of my ability. In his edition, he presents direct quotations in italics, carefully distinguishing word forms that Bede altered from his sources in some way, such as tense or mood, to fit into his own text. Such precision is impossible in translation, but I retain the use of italics to indicate borrowed material. Jones also identified possible sources or parallels for passages which are not quoted *verbatim*. The value of these attributions varies considerably; some of the parallels are quite remote. I have retained in the notes to the translation only a few that seem particularly compelling or instructive. Otherwise I leave it to the reader to follow up these possibilities with the help of Jones's apparatus.

When Bede quotes from the Bible, he almost always uses the Latin Vulgate version of Jerome,[258] except for the Psalms, where he uses the Gallican

255 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen.*, p. vi.

256 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen.*, p. vi. In fact, as one would expect, there are minor discrepancies between both Giles's and Migne's texts and that of Martène. Furthermore, Giles abbreviates the verses in Bede's verse-by-verse citation of Genesis, which is the foundation of his commentary. Giles's reputation as a textual editor of Bede does not stand high (see Jones, *Bedae Pseudepigrapha*, p. 18; Bonner, 'Saint Bede', pp. 1–2 [*BHW*, pp. 155–56]).

257 In fairness to Jones, it should be noted that he declared himself to be very reluctant to depart from the consensus of the manuscripts, even though, as he states (Introduction to Bede, *In Gen.*, p. iii), 'All the long versions seem remote from Bede's autograph'.

258 Gryson's remarks on the Vulgate and Old Latin texts of the Bible that Bede made use of for his *Expositio Apocalypseos* are highly relevant. See Gryson, Introduction to Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, pp. 179–92.

Psalter – the emended Septuagint version that Jerome included as a parallel text to his translation from the Hebrew.[259] I cite the Vulgate from the edition of Robert Weber, revised by Roger Gryson. Weber/Gryson differs in some particulars from successors of the Clementine edition of the Vulgate to which Jones and other editors refer.

In his lemmata, which consistently display the text of the Vulgate, Bede does not number either chapters or verses. In the present translation, the now-conventional numbers have been added in square brackets. It is evident, however, that he followed the *per cola et commata* system of laying out the verses such as is found in the Codex Amiatinus and is maintained in Weber/Gryson. When Bede's lemma does not correspond to a complete verse or set of verses, I indicate his *per cola et commata* divisions with letters referencing the divisions in Weber/Gryson (e.g., **1:14a/c =** from the first through the third *cola* or *commata* of Gen. 1:14; **2:11c-12a =** from the third *colon* or *comma* of Gen. 2:11 through the first *colon* or *comma* of Gen. 2:12).

I have based my translations of biblical texts on the Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate, as revised by Bishop Challoner. However, I have not hesitated to alter the Douay-Rheims text to avoid archaisms or to bring out the point of Bede's comments. Punctuation is my own. The spelling of proper names presents a dilemma. The Vulgate displays Greek spellings of Hebrew names, and the Douay-Rheims translation follows suit. But most modern versions of the Bible (including KJV) go back to the Hebrew forms of the names, and these forms are what most of us are familiar with. It would seem odd and perhaps confusing to refer to Noah, for example, as Noe, which is the Vulgate spelling that Bede employed. Therefore, I have adopted the spellings of KJV (revised in accordance with the modern translations of Robert Alter for the Pentateuch as a whole and E. A. Speiser for Genesis). Similarly, I follow the usage of KJV with respect to the names of the Books of the Old Testament. Where this procedure might be confusing, I give both the KJV and the Douay-Rheims forms (e.g., 1 Samuel/1 Kings, 1 Kings/3 Kings, etc.). Psalms are numbered according to the Vulgate; the KJV numbering is given in parentheses where it differs.

In addition to the Vulgate Latin translation, Bede had access to 'Old-Latin' translations of the Septuagint. Modern scholars are aware that there is, in the words of Peter Hunter Blair, 'no single surviving codex which contains the whole of the Old-Latin Bible… we should rather think of the Old-Latin

259 It is worthy of remark that for his own Abbreviated Psalter, Bede used Jerome's translation *iuxta Hebraeos*. See Ward, 'Bede and the Psalter', p. 10 (*BHW*, p. 880).

Bible as comprising a number of separate books in different translations in use mainly in Italy and Africa, and as contrasting with the new Latin version, partly revision and partly fresh translation from Greek or Hebrew, which was made by Jerome near the end of the fourth century and which we know as the Vulgate'.[260] As noted above, one of the treasures that Abbot Ceolfrith brought back to Wearmouth and Jarrow from Rome was a pandect of an Old-Latin version.[261] Bede's authorities, notably Augustine, quote extensively from the Old-Latin. There were numerous variants between and among manuscripts of the Old-Latin translations and quotations therefrom, and Bede was well aware of this fact. Indeed, he lectured his students on the variant readings they would encounter in manuscripts of the same work and on the causes of textual error.[262] Yet there do not appear to have been two or more Old-Latin translations in Bede's library sufficiently different from each other to lead him to think and write of 'Old-Latin versions' in the plural (Laistner gives simply '*versio vetus Latina*' in his list of books in Bede's library).[263] In books 1 and 2 of *On Genesis*, Bede calls the Old-Latin version *antiqua translatio* (ed. Jones, pp. 23, 46, 50, 57, 65, 71, 76, 84, 94, 105). He contrasts this with *nostra translatio* (p. 65), *nostra editio* (pp. 32, 46, 98), and *nostri codices* (pp. 93, 94). In books 3 and 4, his term for the Old-Latin version is *uetus translatio* (pp. 154, 167, 185, 196, 203, 234). Only once in these latter books does he use *antiqua translatio* (p. 148).[264] However, when Bede speaks of *alia translatio* (as he does three times, ed. Jones, pp. 21, 32, 79), he may be referring to another translation or translations of the Septuagint, references to which, and citations of, he would have come across in Jerome in particular. He also uses the phrases *alia editio* (pp. 59, 145) and *quidam codices* (pp. 99, 180).[265]

As for the translation, it attempts to be faithful to my understanding of the

260 Blair, *The World of Bede*, p. 213.

261 See above, pp. 48–49.

262 See Meyvaert, 'Bede the Scholar', pp. 48–50. A striking instance is recorded in my note to *In Gen.* 1.2083-88 (below, p. 132).

263 Laistner, 'The Library of the Venerable Bede', p. 264. In *Thought and Letters*, p. 161, Laistner states: 'His interest in the text criticism of the Bible was unique in his age. The Vulgate text that he used most consistently is that now represented by the *Codex Amiatinus* … But he knew other manuscripts of the Vulgate and also at times consulted one or more Old Latin versions of the Bible'.

264 On Bede's 'interest in the text criticism of the Bible', see Brown, *Bede the Venerable*, p. 20.

265 See Plummer's extensive remarks on Bede's comparison of the Vulgate and the 'Itala' in *BOH* 1, liv, n. 7.

meaning of Bede's text, while observing the conventions of English word order and style. I have avoided as much as possible the use of insertions in square brackets, which means that I sometimes add a clarifying word or supply a proper name in place of a pronoun.

Bede employs four terms for the spiritual meaning which his allegorical method uncovers: *allegoria*, *arcanum*, *mysterium*, and *sacramentum*. To some extent, these terms are interchangeable, but insofar as they can be differentiated, *allegoria* and its derivatives refer to meanings implicit in the Old Testament that are revealed in the New;[266] *arcanum* denotes the secrets of the faith that are concealed from outsiders; *sacramentum* puts the emphasis on God's plan for salvation and the rituals that embody them; while *mysterium* is a more general term that may be substituted for any of the others.[267] I have avoided attempting to bring out shades of meaning in my translation, and therefore, to the extent possible, I English them as 'allegory', 'secret', 'sacrament', and 'mystery'.

Bede had only one term (*uetus*/*nouum*) *testamentum* for what we call either the (Old/New) 'Covenant' or the (Old/New) 'Testament'. These are overlapping concepts, and it is often not easy to decide which modern word better conveys Bede's meaning. In most instances I have translated it as 'covenant'.

CATALOGUE OF MANUSCRIPTS AND EDITIONS OF *ON GENESIS*

In the years since Jones published his edition of *On Genesis* scholars have called attention to several manuscripts and early editions of the work that were unknown to Jones and to his precursor, M. L. W. Laistner. In light of this new information, it seems appropriate to offer an expanded and corrected summary of their catalogues based on the augmented list prepared by Michael Gorman.[268] I retain Jones's *sigla* (with two additions: W = Cambridge, Trinity College B.4.32; Lp = London, Lambeth Palace 148) for

266 For the varied usages of *allegoria* in the patristic period, see Auerbach, '"Figura"', pp. 47–48.

267 For more detailed discussion of these terms and their varied meanings, see Kendall, 'The Responsibility of *Auctoritas*', pp. 106–11. Jones analyses Bede's critical vocabulary in 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 151–66. His summary conclusion is: 'Terms normally considered technical have no definite or consistent meaning in Bede's exegesis' (p. 151). See also Carroll, *The Venerable Bede*, pp. 120–23.

268 Cf. Laistner, *Hand-List*, pp. 41–43; Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., pp. i–vi; Gorman, 'Commentary on the Pentateuch, second part', pp. 303–307.

the manuscripts for use in connection with Appendix 2. Manuscripts marked with an asterisk (*) are certainly or probably lost or destroyed.

MANUSCRIPTS

Shorter Version (Ia + Ib)

EINSIEDELN, Stiftsbibliothek 376, s. x. (E)

PARIS, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 9568, AD 1051–1081, foll. 3–15, Echternach.

ST GALL, Stiftsbibliothek 255, s. ix[1], pp. 1–113, St Gall. (S)

Shorter Version (Ia only)

ADMONT, Stiftsbibliothek 174, s. xii, foll. 1[v]–20.

OSLO, The Schøyen Collection 229 (Phillipps 1347), s. xii, foll. 16–26, Germany.

OXFORD, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 159, s. ix[2], foll. 16[v]–29, Lorsch. (L)

PARIS, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 13372, s. xii, foll. 109–140[v].

PARIS, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 13373, AD 817–835, foll. 108–132[v], Corbie. (C)

VIENNA, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, lat. 1004 (Univ. 54), foll. 1[v]–17, s. xii. (V)

Longer Version (books 1–4)

CAMBRIDGE, Jesus College Q A 14, s. xii[1], foll. 1–120[v], Durham. (A)

CAMBRIDGE, Trinity College B.4.32 (James 146), s. xii/xiii, foll. 2–122, Warden. (W)

*CHARTRES, Bibliothèque municipale 96, s. x (destroyed in 1945[269]; see St-Martin de Sées).

DIJON, Bibliothèque municipale 46, s. ix, St-Bénigne. Used by Martène. (D)

LONDON, Lambeth Palace 148, s. xii, Lanthony. (Lp)

*Metz, St-Vincent, codex (lost[270]). Used by Martène.

MILAN, Biblioteca Ambrosiana C 83 sup., s. ix, foll. 1[v]–123, Bobbio. (B)

ORLÉANS, Bibliothèque municipale 34, s. ix[2], Fleury. Used by Martène.

269 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. vi, n. 9.

270 Gorman, 'Bede's *VIII Quaestiones*', p. 61, n. 103.

ORLÉANS, Bibliothèque municipale 192, s. x[1].

PARIS, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 12271, s. ix, foll. 1–95, Corbie. Used by Martène. (P)

PARIS, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 13401, s. x, St-Germain. Used by Martène. (G)

REIMS, Bibliothèque municipale 116, s. ix[2], foll. 127–223, St-Thierry. (R)

ROUEN, Bibliothèque municipale 525, s. xii, foll. 31–134, St-Ouen. Used by Martène.

*St-Martin de Sées, codex. Perhaps = CHARTRES 96.[271] Used by Martène.

TROYES, Bibliothèque municipale 1006, s. xii, foll. 1–188, Clairvaux. (T)

*Vendôme, codex (almost certainly lost[272]). Used by Martène.

EDITIONS

WINTER (Basel, 1538; repr. 1545). The *editio princeps* of Ia of the shorter version, published by Robert Winter. Bede's work was attributed to Junilius, under the title *Iunilii episcopi Africani in priora aliquot Geneseos capita ualde doctus et utilis Commentarius, ad Primasium Episcopum, nunc primum in lucem editus. Ex uetustissimo exemplo Bibliothecae Ioannis Alexandri Brassicani poetae*.[273] Junilius is Junilius Afer or Africanus (d. ca. 552), whose *De partibus diuinae legis* is found in PL 68. Gorman surmises that the copy-text for this version was Vienna MS 1004 (V).[274]

NIVELLIUS (Paris, 1550). A reprint of Winter by Sebastian Nivellius.[275]

HERWAGEN (Basel, 1563; repr. Cologne, 1612, 1688). In vol. 4, pp. A1–A26, of his eight-volume collection of Bede's works, entitled *Venerabilis Bedae Opera Omnia*, John Herwagen printed Ia of the shorter version, under the title *Hexaemeron sive de Sex Dierum Creatione Libellus*. It is probably a reprint of the 1538 edition of Winter.[276] Therefore, although

271 Gorman, 'Bede's *VIII Quaestiones*', p. 61, n. 103; see Laistner, *Hand-List*, p. 42, s.v., CHARTRES.

272 Gorman, 'Bede's *VIII Quaestiones*', p. 61, n. 103.

273 Gorman, 'Commentary on the Pentateuch, first part', p. 63, n. 4.

274 Gorman, 'Commentary on the Pentateuch, second part', p. 305.

275 Gorman, 'The Canon of Bede's Works', p. 444.

276 Gorman, 'Commentary on Genesis', p. 304, n. 91.

he was unaware of the role of this intermediary, Jones seems to have been right to assert that Vienna MS 1004 might underlie Herwagen's text.[277]

LA BIGNE (Paris, 1576). In Marguerin de La Bigne, *Sacra bibliotheca SS. Patrum*, vol. 6, cols. 1–24. Another reprint of Winter.[278]

WHARTON (London, 1692/1693). The *editio princeps* of the longer version, published by Henry Wharton in the volume entitled *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Quaedam Theologica, nunc primum edita, necnon Historica, antea semel edita*. (There has never been an independently printed edition of the full text of the shorter version.) For *On Genesis*, Wharton transcribed London, Lambeth Palace MS 148.[279] J. A. Giles, who was aware of the earlier edition of Herwagen and the confusion of Bede with Junilius, recognized Wharton's priority in the publication of the longer version: 'This work, of which a portion only, under the title of *Hexameron sive de sex dierum creatione*, is found in the folio collections of the works, [Bas. iv. 1-26, Col. iv. 1-18.] and in the Bibliotheca Patrum, where it is ascribed to Junilius Afer, … was first made complete by Wharton'.[280]

Curiously, however, Wharton omitted that portion of the longer version which corresponds to the Ia of the shorter version that had already been printed by Winter and Herwagen, and he combined Ib with book 2 of the longer version into a single book. The misleading consequence was an incomplete version of *On Genesis* in three books. Hence, Giles's statement that Bede's commentary 'was first made complete by Wharton' is misleading, though not actually wrong.

MARTÈNE (Paris, 1717). The first complete edition of the longer version (indeed, the first complete edition of either version), in *Thesaurus Novus Anecdotum*, edited by Edmond Martène and Ursinus Durand, vol. 5, cols. 111-294. The work is entitled *VENERABILIS BEDÆ / PRESBYTERI ET MONACHI BENEDICTINI / LIBRI QUATUOR, / IN PRINCIPIUM GENESIS, USQUE AD NATIVITATEM / ISAAC ET EJECTIONEM ISMAELIS. / Ex pluribus mss. codicibus*. Martène based his edition on a total of nine manuscripts: three which he cited as proof that Bede arranged the longer version in four books, not three (as Wharton had it), and another six upon which he established his text. That the longer

277 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. iv.
278 Gorman, 'The Canon of Bede's Works', p. 444.
279 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. v.
280 Giles, *In Genesim*, pp. ix–x.

version of *In Genesim* is divided into four books, he says, 'is supported by three ancient manuscripts of Bede, one of the celebrated St-Ouen of Rouen written 600 years ago,[281] the second of around the same age of the monastery of St-Martin of Sées, the third of Vendôme… The six oldest manuscripts, in which is contained this work of Bede's arranged in four books, are witnesses: the first an elegantly written manuscript of the monastery of St Benedict of Fleury from around the 900s,[282] two others of Corbie,[283] the fourth of St Benignus of Dijon, whose style suits the 800s well,[284] the fifth of Clairvaux from about 600 years ago [i.e., the twelfth century],[285] and the sixth [of the monastery] of St Vincent of Metz of about the same age'.[286]

GILES (London, 1844). In vol. 7 of the complete works in 12 volumes, *Venerabilis Bedae Opera quae Supersunt Omnia*, edited by J. A. Giles, under the title *Commentarii in principium Genesis, usque ad nativitatem Isaac et ejectionem Ismaelis*. Giles copied the text of Martène, omitting the notes and variant readings, and abbreviating Biblical passages.

MIGNE (Paris, 1850). In PL 91, edited by J.-P. Migne, entitled *Hexaemeron, sive libri quatuor in principium Genesis*. A reprint of Martène's text.

JONES (Turnhout, 1967). A new critical edition of the longer version, *Libri quatuor in principium Genesis usque ad natiuitatem Isaac et eiectionem Ismahelis adnotationum*, in CCSL 118A, based on a comparison of Martène's text with collation in whole or in part of MSS ABCDEGL-PRSTV.

281 ROUEN 525.

282 ORLÉANS 34.

283 One of the Corbie MSS is PARIS lat. 13401 (so Gorman, 'Bede's *VIII Quaestiones*', p. 61, n. 103; not PARIS lat. 13373 [as stated by Laistner, *Hand-List*, p. 42; Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. vi; Gorman, 'Commentary on the Pentateuch, second part', p. 305], because 13373 contains Ia only, and Martène explicitly states that his MSS contained the work in four books); the other Corbie MS is PARIS lat. 12271.

284 DIJON 46.

285 TROYES 1006.

286 *Ita enim legendum, non* libros tres*, ut vulgo in editis, suadent antiqui tres manuscripti Bedae codices, unus celeberrimi S. Audoeni Rotomagensis ante annos 600. exaratus, alter ejusdem circiter aetatis Sagiensis S. Martini asceterii, tertius Vindocinensis … Suffragantur antiquissimi sex Codices, in quibus Bedae hoc opus quatuor in libros distributum continetur: unus Floriacensis monasterii S. Benedicti ab annis circiter nongentis eleganter scriptus, duo alii Corbeienses quartus Divionensis S. Benigni, quorum caracter annos bene octingentos refert, quintus Clarevallensis annorum circiter 600, & sextus Metensis S. Vincentii ejusdem circiter ætatis* (cols. 113–14).

COMMENTARY ON
THE BEGINNING OF GENESIS

PREFACE
LETTER TO ACCA, BISHOP OF THE SEE OF HEXHAM

Bede, the humblest of the servants of Christ, sends greetings to his very beloved and reverend bishop Acca.[1]

Many persons have said many things about the beginning of the book of Genesis in which is described the creation of this world, and they have left to posterity many monuments of their ability. Chief among them, as far as my humble self has been able to learn, are Basil of Caesarea[2] whom the translator Eustathius[3] turned from Greek into Latin, Ambrose of Milan,[4] and Bishop Augustine of Hippo.[5] The first of these in nine books [i.e., Basil/Eustathius], the second following his footsteps in six books [i.e., Ambrose], and the third in twelve books [i.e., Augustine], and additionally in two others written especially against the Manicheans,[6] poured forth abundant streams of the doctrine of salvation to readers. In them was fulfilled the promise of truth, in regard to which Christ said, *He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*.[7] In addition, Augustine also made some mention, with suitable exposition, of this same primordial act of creation in his *Confessions*, and in the outstanding book that he wrote against the adversary of the Law and the Prophets,[8] and here and there in

1 Bishop of Hexham from 709; deposed in 731.

2 St Basil the Great (330?–379?), bishop of Caesarea: *Homiliae in Hexaemeron*. Basil is the first authority Bede quotes by name in *HE* 1.1 (Colgrave and Mynors, p. 14). Despite the fact that Jones (Index Auctorum, CCSL 118A, 258) includes this and Basil's *Epistulae* among the possible sources of *On Genesis*, I have found no evidence that Bede, while working on *On Genesis*, had access to any of the works of Basil except Eustathius's translation of the *Hexaemeron* (see next note). However, this must be set against Laistner's observation (*Thought and Letters*, p. 161) that Bede 'quotes from Basil's *Hexameron*, though not in the Latin version of Eustathius'.

3 Eustathius Afer (fl. 440): Basil/Eustathius, *In Hexaemeron*.

4 St Ambrose (340?–397), bishop of Milan: *Hexaemeron*.

5 St Augustine (354–430), bishop of Hippo: *De Genesi ad litteram*.

6 Probably the reference is to the two books of Augustine's *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*.

7 John 7:38.

8 The 'adversary of the Law and the Prophets' is the unknown heretic against whom Augustine published his tract, *Contra aduersarium legis et prophetarum*, ca. 420.

his other works.[9]

But because these are so copious and deep that so many volumes can scarcely be acquired except by the very wealthy and such profound matters can scarcely be studied except by the very learned, it pleased your holiness to place the duty upon me to gather from all these, as if from the most delightful fields of a widely blooming paradise, those things which would seem sufficient for the needs of the weak. I have not been tardy in carrying out what you deigned to command, but rather, after thoroughly perusing the volumes of the fathers, I immediately selected from them, and arranged in two books,[10] those things which could instruct a still inexperienced reader and by which a scholar might learn to climb to the higher and more powerful reading of our elders. In this work I took care throughout to set down the meaning of the aforementioned fathers **/2/** and of others equally catholic, sometimes in their very words, sometimes for the sake of brevity in my own – with their words now omitted, now recorded – just as the appropriateness of the topics dictated. And I have carried through the work up to the point where Adam, having been ejected from the *paradise of pleasure*,[11] entered the exile of this temporal life.[12]

I shall write some things also about subsequent events of the sacred narrative, God willing, with the attendant help of your intercession, after I first investigate, however inadequately, the book of the holy prophet and priest Ezra, in which is found the sacraments of Christ and the Church under the allegorical figure of the release from the long captivity,[13] the restoration of the temple,[14] the rebuilding of the city,[15] the return to Jerusalem of the vessels which had been taken away,[16] the rewriting of the Law which had

9 On the probability that Bede knew Cassiodorus's *Institutions*, based on parallels between the works cited in this paragraph and those mentioned by Cassiodorus in *Institutiones* 1.1.1-4 (ed. Mynors, pp. 11–12), see Courcelle, *Les letters grecques en Occident*, pp. 374–75, and n. 1 (p. 375); Gorman, 'The Codex Amiatinus', pp. 869–72.

10 I.e., the two books of the shorter version, which now form book 1.

11 Cf. Gen. 2:8; 2:15.

12 That is, through Gen. 3:24. This is clear evidence that the letter to Acca, which is prefixed to all the MSS of *On Genesis*, was originally composed for the shorter version. When Bede resumed commenting on Genesis, he carried the work up to Gen. 21:10. For discussion of the composition and dating of *On Genesis*, see Introduction, pp. 40–53.

13 Cf. Ezra 1:1. The Babylonian captivity lasted 48 years from the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC to 538 BC.

14 Cf. Ezra 1:2-4.

15 Cf. Neh. 3:1–6:15.

16 Cf. Ezra 1:7-11.

been burned,[17] the purification of the people from the foreign wives,[18] and the people's conversion with one heart and soul to the service of God, as the prophet who was also a historian wrote; and after I explain more openly for the learned, with the help of God, some of these sacraments which I have mentioned.

As always, may you be well, my dearly beloved bishop, and remember me in the Lord. **/3/**

17 The story of Ezra's restoration of the Hebrew canon of Scripture following its loss in the destruction of Jerusalem is found in the apocryphal second book of Esdras (4 Ezra 14:18-47). See *In Gen.* 3.1385-89 (below, p. 258), and *In Ezram* 2.772-78 (CCSL 119A, 307), 2.791-818 (CCSL 119A, 307–308), *In Sam.* 2.522-28 (CCSL 119, 80), and *In Reges* 7.17-21 (CCSL 119, 301).

18 Cf. Ezra 10:1-44 and *In Ezram* 2.1837-64 (CCSL 119A, 333–34).

BOOK ONE

[1:1] In the beginning God created heaven and earth. By introducing the creation of the world in the first sentence, Holy Scripture appropriately displays at once the eternity and omnipotence of God the creator. For by asserting that God created the world at the beginning of time, Scripture signifies that he indeed existed eternally before time. And when it tells that he created heaven and earth in the very beginning of creation, by such great swiftness of work it declares that he, for whom to have willed is to have done, is omnipotent. For when human frailty does anything, for instance, when we build a house, at the beginning of the job we prepare the building materials, and after this beginning we dig down into the earth; then we set stones into the foundation, and then we build up the walls with rising courses of stone; and so, progressing slowly, we come to the completion of the work that has been planned.[1] But God, whose ability to complete his work is unlimited, he who, as it is written, *has done all things whatsoever he would*,[2] had no need of a delay of time. Hence it is well said that *In the beginning God created heaven and earth*, in order that it may be clearly understood that he did both simultaneously, although it could not be said simultaneously in human language. Finally, the Prophet says, *In the beginning you founded the earth, O Lord.*[3] Here, however, the Lord is said *in the beginning* to have *created heaven and earth*; hence it is clearly inferred that the creation of each part was completed simultaneously, and this with such great swiftness of divine power that the first moment of the infant world had not yet passed. Moreover, that *in the beginning God made heaven and earth* can very probably be understood in the words of the only-begotten Son who, when the Jews asked why they should believe in him, replied, [*I*

1 Anglo-Saxons lived in houses built of wood. Bede probably has in mind the stone churches of Wearmouth and Jarrow, for the construction of which, as he notes in his *Historia Abbatum*, ch. 5, Benedict Biscop imported stonemasons from France.

2 Ps. 113:11(3) (115:3). Except as noted, Bede quotes the Psalms *Iuxta LXX*.

3 Ps. 101:26 (102:25).

am] *the beginning, which I also speak unto you.*[4] *For*, as the Apostle says, *in him were all things created in heaven and on earth*.[5] But it must be carefully observed, as each one devotes his attention to the allegorical senses, how far he may have forsaken the manifest truth of history by allegorical interpretation. **/4/** And which and what sort of heaven it is which was made in the beginning with the earth is made known in the following words, when it is said:

[1:2a/b] And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. Now why did Scripture introduce these details about the earth, with no reference to heaven, except that it wished nothing of this kind to be understood about heaven? That, of course, is the higher heaven which, having been kept distinct from every condition of this mutable world, remains forever undisturbed in the glory of the divine presence (for, concerning our heaven, in which are placed the lights necessary for this life, Scripture declares in the following verses both how and when it was made). Accordingly, that higher heaven, which is inaccessible to the sight of all mortals, was not created void and empty like the earth, which produced no green shoots and no living animals in its first creation, because truly as soon as it was created it was filled with its inhabitants, that is, with the blessed hosts of angels. They were created in the beginning with heaven and earth, and immediately referred their own creation together with that of the entire primordial creation to the praise of the Creator as the Creator himself asserts, when, speaking to his holy servant Job, he says, *Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?* [6] and a little further on, *when the morning stars praised me together, and all the sons of God made a joyful melody?*[7] – calling *morning stars* those same angels whom he also calls *sons of God*, undoubtedly for the sake of distinguishing them from the saints who in the aftermath of creation and like the evening stars were to be extinguished after their confession of divine praise by the death of the flesh. One of these morning stars indeed, in view of his scorn of the common praise of God, deserved to hear, *How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who did rise in the morning! How you are fallen to the earth, who did wound the nations! And you said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God*.[8] In his commentary on this passage

4 John 8:25.
5 Col. 1:16.
6 Job 38:4.
7 Job 38:7.
8 Isa. 14:12-13.

St Jerome even mentions the higher heaven, writing as follows: *Either he said these things before he fell from heaven or after he fell from heaven. If he were still in heaven, how is it that he says, 'I will ascend into heaven'? But since we read, 'the heaven of heaven is the Lord's',*[9] *although he was in heaven, that is, in the sky, Lucifer wished to ascend into the heaven where the Lord's throne* **/5/** *is, not out of humility but from pride. But if he speaks these haughty words after he fell from heaven, we ought to understand him to be one who, having been cast down, will not be quiet, but still promises great things for himself, not to be among the stars but above the stars of God*.[10] Rightly, therefore, the heaven of heavens is not said to have been made void and empty, but neither is any place in it or the abyss asserted to remain in darkness, because the Lord God illuminates *and* his *lamp is the Lamb*.[11] And rightly, *the earth was void and empty*, with the whole abyss also, that is, it was covered with an immense profundity of waters. Rightly, *darkness was upon the face of the deep*, since the light which would dispel it had not yet been created. But pay no attention to those who, censuring God, say that he created darkness before light, because God did not make any darkness in the water or the air, but in the clear order of his providence he created first the waters with heaven and the earth and afterwards, as he himself wished, he beautified them with the grace of light. We see that he does this right up to the present both in the water itself and in the air through the daily rising and setting of the sun. Nor is it correct to believe that the waters were made other than by God, because although Scripture does not say it openly here, nevertheless it signifies it openly when it makes known that they were illuminated by God and set in order at his command. And also the Psalm plainly says, *and let the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord. For he spoke, and they were made*.[12]

Here it should be noted that two elements of this world, namely water and earth, are expressly mentioned as having been made in the beginning with heaven. But it is a known fact that the two other elements had been added to these – namely, fire in the iron and stones which lay hidden, already buried even then in the bowels of the earth, and *air* in the earth itself with which, *from the fact that when the earth is moistened and tempered with the sun,*

9 Ps. 113:16 (115:16).

10 Jerome, *In Isaiam* 6.12.13-14 (PL 24, 220). Bede quotes this passage from Jerome in *DTR* 5.64-72 (*BOT*, p. 188).

11 Rev. 21:23.

12 Ps. 148:4-5.

it soon exhales the most abundant steam, it is found to have been mixed.[13] Likewise, burning fire implanted in the interior of the earth is brought forth by hot springs of waters, which, passing *through some particular metals* in the depths of the waters, flow out upon the surface of the earth, *not only hot but even* boiling.[14] For these were not, *as some argue*, mixed together formlessly, but the earth, confined in every direction by the same borders as it is now, **/6/** was then in its entirety just as it still partly remains under the deepest depth of the sea.[15] And the waters covered its whole surface to such a depth that they extended as far as those places, where to this day, resting partly above the firmament of heaven, they do not cease to praise the name of God the creator with the heavens of the heavens. To this extent only is that *matter* of which the world was made *unformed*, as Scripture declares, which says *in praise of God, 'You who made the world of unformed matter'*.[16] For all things which we are accustomed to see in the world made up of waters and earth either derived the origin of their nature from them or from nothing. But earth and waters themselves get the name of unformed matter because, before they came into the light from which they derived their beauty, it did not exist. *Why is it unsuitable, if the origins of mundane matter were dark, that what was made would be rendered better with approaching light, and that the condition of man advancing, so to speak, toward a more perfect state, what was to be afterwards, would be signified in this way*,[17] according to the explanation of the Apostle who says, *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts*?[18] Hence, he elsewhere says, *You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord*[19] – the one who, when darkness was upon the face of the abyss, said, *Let there be light, and light was made*.[20]

13 Basil/Eust., *In Hex.* 1.7 (PL 53, 875).

14 Basil/Eust., *In Hex.* 4.6 (PL 53, 908). Bede quotes some of these same words from Basil/Eustathius in *HE* 1.1 (Colgrave and Mynors, p. 16).

15 Cf. Basil/Eust., *In Hex.* 2.4 (PL 53, 883–84). The point of this somewhat obscure sentence seems to be that the element earth was originally completely unmixed with other elements, as it still is in the lowest depths beneath the sea.

16 Augustine, *DGCM* 1.5.9 (CSEL 91, 76); Wisdom 11:18 (Old-Latin version, from Augustine).

17 Augustine, *Contra aduersarium* 1.8.11 (PL 42, 609).

18 2 Cor. 4:6.

19 Eph. 5:8.

20 Gen. 1:3. The problem that Bede addresses in this paragraph has its roots in the semantic range in Latin of *forma* and its derivatives and compounds. *Forma* connotes not only 'form' but also 'beauty'. Hence, what is 'formless' is ugly as well as being without shape. Bede is therefore at pains to deny that God's creation was in any way formless or misshapen, despite

[1:2c] And the Spirit of God moved over the waters.[21] It should not be childishly inferred that the creating Spirit, of whom it is written, *the Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world*,[22] moved from a spatial position to the things that were about to be created. Instead it should be understood that on account of its divine virtue it excelled the things that it created, having in its own power when it would give light to the abyss of waters, when it would part them into one place so that dry land should appear, and when and how it would arrange other created things according to its own will, rather like a workman whose intended design **/7/** is customarily transferred to the things which are to be constructed. This also pertains to the distinctiveness of the higher heaven, in which the arrangement of the Holy Spirit gave light completely and at once to all existing things. But the Spirit intended to bring these first elements of a good creation in inferior creatures, that is, in the creatures of this world, to perfection according to circumstances. And in fact Moses mentioned the higher world so briefly because he had resolved to speak about this world, in which man was made, for the instruction of the human race, believing it sufficient to include the whole condition and adornment of the spiritual and invisible creation under the single name of heaven, which he said was made in the beginning, but believing that he should describe the corporeal, visible, and corruptible creation more extensively in due order.[23] That is, passing over in silence those deeper and more audacious matters which men investigate by inquiry, he determined rather that *those things* ought to be *thought on that God commanded* or promised to men.[24] Hence, he was deliberately and completely silent about the fall of the transgressor angel and his companions, because this truly pertained to the condition of that invisible and spiritual creation. St Basil speaks of this higher and invisible creation in the second book of his *Hexaemeron* in this way: *For I think that if there was something before the creation of this perceptible and corruptible world, it was assuredly in light. For neither the order of angels nor of the host of all celestial beings, or if there is any known or nameless or any other rational power, or attendant spirit, would have*

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the words of Scripture, which he quotes: *You who made the world of unformed matter*. His is an aesthetics of light – the matter created by God is 'unformed' only until it is bathed in light, which reveals its form and beauty.

21 For discussion of Bede's commentary on the Spirit of God, see Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 174–76.

22 Wisdom 1:7.

23 Bede, like the fathers of the patristic period, accepted without question the ancient Hebraic tradition that Moses was the author of the first five books of the Bible.

24 Sirach 3:22.

been able to endure in darkness, but it possessed a form suitable for itself in light and beauty.[25] But when Moses taught that in the beginning God, that is, the Father in the Son, made heaven and earth, he also properly brought in a mention of the Holy Spirit by adding, *And the Spirit of God moved over the waters*, in order to signify that the power of the whole Trinity at once worked together in the creation of the world.

[1:3] And God said, **Let there be light, and light was made**. It is appropriate for the works of God that he should begin the adornment of the world with light. Since **/8/** he himself is the true light and inhabits inaccessible light, the most blessed sight of which the angels in the heaven of heavens had begun to enjoy immediately as they were created, he properly also bestowed the first grace of material light upon this world for the sake of adornment, so that there would exist the means by which the other things that he created would become visible. And as to the fact that God is asserted to have said either that light or that anything else be made, we must not believe that he did it in our fashion by the corporeal sound of the voice. Rather, it should be understood more profoundly that God said that creation be made, because he made everything by his Word, that is, by his only-begotten Son. The evangelist John speaks more clearly about this when he says, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him*.[26] Therefore, what John says, namely that all things were made by the Word of God, is the same as what Moses says, that *God said, let there be light*; and that *he said, let there be a firmament made*; and that *he said, let* the rest of creation *be made*, and so forth.[27] It is the same as what the Psalm, with the addition of the person of the Holy Spirit, says, *By the word of the Lord the heavens were established and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth*.[28] But if it is asked, in what place light was made by the command of God, since the abyss still covered the whole breadth of the earth, it is very clear that that first light shone forth then in the upper parts of the same earth, which the daily light of the sun even now customarily illuminates. Nor ought we to marvel that light can shine by divine grace in the waters, since it is well-known that they are also illuminated by the operation of men, namely sailors, who, having plunged into the depths of the sea, by emitting oil from

25 Basil/Eust., *In Hex.* 2.5 (PL 53, 885).
26 John 1:1-3.
27 Gen. 1:3, 1:6, 1:14; etc.
28 Ps. 32:6 (33:6).

the mouth, render it bright and clear for themselves.[29] For if a man can do such things by oil of his mouth, how much more is it the case that God was able to create by the Spirit[30] of his mouth – especially since we must accept that in the beginning, before they were *gathered together into one* place so that *the dry land might appear*,[31] the waters were much more attenuated than we are accustomed to see now on the earth.[32] **/9/**

[1:4a] And God saw the light that it was good. It is not that, suddenly seeing the light which was previously unknown, God praised it because he discovered that it was good; but now that what he knew that he would make praiseworthy was made, he declared it to be worthy of praise and reverence by men. Nevertheless, because he did not dispel all the darkness of the world with infused light – for it is for the higher world to enjoy to the full fixed and perpetual light – but while illuminating it in one part, he left the other in the dark, it is rightly added:

[1:4b] And he divided the light from the darkness. For he divided them not only by difference of nature, but also of place, that is to say, by diffusing light in the upper part of the world, in which there was to be human intercourse, and by allowing the lower parts of it to remain in their former darkness.[33]

[1:5a] And he called the light day, and the darkness night. *This was said for our understanding, for in what language* did *God* call the light day and the darkness night, *in Hebrew, or Greek, or some other? And similarly, with regard to everything that he named, it can be asked, in what language did he name it? But with God intellection is simple, without the noise and diversity of languages. Moreover,* 'he called' *was used to mean 'he caused* to be called*', because he distinguished and ordered everything in such a*

29 Bede takes this picturesque bit of nautical lore from Ambrose, but in *DTR* he makes use of an alternative version, drawn from Basil/Eustathius, which holds that sailors pour oil on the surface of the sea to make the depths more visible. Both versions derive ultimately from Pliny, *NH* 2.106.234.

30 A delicate theological pun. God creates by the breath (*spiritus*) of his mouth, which Bede would have us understand signifies the Holy Spirit, which is the focus of his commentary on this verse. In *DTR* he uses the phrase *sui oris afflatus* for 'the breath of his mouth' (as does Basil/Eustathius).

31 *DTR* 5.86 (*BOT*, p. 189).

32 This and the preceding sentence closely paraphrase Ambrose, *Hex*. 1.9.33 (CSEL 32, 35–36), and Basil/Eust., *In Hex.* 2.7 (PL 53, 887); cf. Bede, *DTR* 5.81-86 (*BOT*, p. 189).

33 In Bede's cosmology, the earth was a stationary sphere about which the sun moved. Its known inhabitants dwelt in Europe, Asia, and Africa, which was 'the upper part'. The 'lower parts' (corresponding roughly to what we know as the Americas and the Pacific Ocean) were assumed to be uninhabited. See Introduction, pp. 30–32.

way that days could both be discerned and receive their names. Thus, for example, we say, the head of the household 'built' that house, that is, he caused it to be built, and many such cases are found through all the books of the Holy Scriptures.[34]

[1:5b] And there was evening and morning one day. *And there was evening*, with the light gradually setting after the completed period of the length of the day and passing beneath the lower parts of the world, which now regularly happens at night with the familiar circuit of the sun. *And there was morning*, with the same light gradually returning above the earth and beginning another day. At this point *one* day was completed – without doubt a day of twenty-four hours. By its particular emphasis upon this word, Scripture carefully calls our attention to the fact that the light which was made traversed the lower parts of the globe by its setting, for if it did not do this, but rather, when there was evening, it gradually disappeared completely and gradually reappeared again in the morning, **/10/** Scripture would not now say that one day was completed in the morning of the following day, but rather that it was completed in the evening of the first day. Hence it also preferred to say that there was evening and morning rather than night and day, in order to reveal that what was then done by the circuit of that first and most excellent light is now known to be performed day and night by the circuit of the sun – with this exception alone, that after the creation of the stars night also is flooded with light, just like but lesser than day. During that first three-day period night remained utterly dark and obscure, for it was in every way fitting that day beginning in light was prolonged into the morning of the following day, since the handiwork of the one who is the true light and in whom there is no darkness was reported to begin with light and all things were completed in light.

[1:6-8] And God said, Let there be a firmament made in the midst of the waters; and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made a firmament, and divided the waters that were under the firmament from those that were above the firmament, and it was so. And God called the firmament, Heaven. And the evening and morning were the second day. Here is described the creation of our heaven in which are the fixed stars. It is certain that this firmament is in the midst of the waters, for we ourselves see the waters that were placed beneath it and in the air and lands, and we are informed about those that were placed above it, not only by the authority of this Scriptural passage, but also by the words of the Prophet, who says,

34 Augustine, *DGCM* 1.9.15 (CSEL 91, 81–82).

stretching out the heaven like an animal skin, you cover its upper parts with waters.[35] Therefore it is known that the starry heaven was created in the midst of the waters, nor does anything prevent a belief that it was also made from the waters. For what prevents us, who know how great is the firmness as well as the transparency and purity *of crystalline rock*, which is known to have been made from *the congealing of waters*,[36] from believing that the same Disposer of the things of nature solidified the substance of waters in the firmament of heaven? But if it puzzles anyone, how the waters, whose nature it is always to flow and to sink to the lowest point, can settle above heaven, **/11/** whose shape seems to be round, he should remember Holy Scripture saying about God, *He binds up the waters in his clouds, so that they break not out and fall down together*.[37] And he should understand that God, who when he wishes and as occasion warrants binds up the waters beneath heaven, which are supported by no foundation of a firmer substance, but are held only by the vapours of the clouds so that they too may not fall, could also suspend the waters above the round sphere of heaven, not with vaporous thinness but with ice-like solidity, so that they would never fall. But although he willed to fix the liquid waters there, is this any greater a miracle than that, as Scripture says, the very *bulk of the earth he has hanged on nothing*?[38] And when the waters both of the Red Sea and of the river Jordan are lifted up on high and made firm like walls for the passage of the people of Israel, do they not give visible evidence that, even beyond the revolving rotundity of heaven, they can remain in a fixed position? Of course, what sort of waters may be there and for what uses they may have been reserved, the Creator himself would know; only he left no room for doubt that they are there, because Holy Scripture said so. What it is to say of God, let this or that created thing be, has already been said above.[39] For he said that it should be, when he arranged for everything to be created through the Word, that is to say, his only-begotten Son, who is coeternal with himself. Therefore, when we have heard, *God said, Let there be a firmament made in the midst of the waters; and let it divide the waters from the waters*, we are to understand that it was through the Word of God that it was done, through whom God foresaw inwardly before all time that whatever he did outwardly in time was to be done. But when we have heard, *And God made a firmament, and divided the waters that were under*

35 Ps. 103:2-3 (104:2-3).
36 Basil/Eust., *In Hex.* 3.4 (PL 53, 894).
37 Job 26:8.
38 Isa. 40:12; Job 26:7 (perhaps a memorial blend of the two passages).
39 *In Gen.* 1.168-80 (above, p. 73).

the firmament from those that were above the firmament, and it was so, we should understand that, when the creation and arrangement of heaven and the waters were done, they did not exceed the limits prescribed for them in the Word of God, according to the verse of the Psalmist, *he has made a decree, and he will not exceed it.*[40] This must equally be understood of the things mentioned as having been created in the following four days. But whenever we hear added, **/12/** *And God saw that it was good*,[41] we are to understand not that in the benevolence of his Spirit it was, as it were, discovered after it was done that it was pleasing, but rather that it was pleasing that it should stay in that goodness when it was pleasing that it was done.

Indeed, it should be noted that this additional phrase is not found in this place in the Hebrew Truth.[42] It is a puzzle why here alone, that is, in the labours of the second day, among all the things which we read that God created, the approval of the divine vision is not added. These labours, moreover, are shown to have been seen to be good, along with the rest of the things that God made, when it is subsequently said, *And God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good*.[43] Perhaps the answer is, as some of the Fathers explain, that Holy Scripture wished us to understand from this *that the number two is not good, which separates off from unity and prefigures the bonds of marriage. And hence all the animals in Noah's ark which enter by twos are unclean, and* it is revealed *that the odd number is clean.*[44]

In St Clement's History, indeed, the apostle Peter is reported to have said of the things that have been explained thus far, that is, the creation of the first and second day: *In the beginning, when God made heaven and earth, like a structure, the shadow which was cast by the framework of the world upon those things that had been shut up inside gave darkness from itself. But when the will of God introduced light, that darkness which had been made from the shadow of the framework was immediately swallowed up. From then on, light was assigned to day and darkness to night. Now, indeed, the water which was within the world in the middle of the space between*

40 Ps. 148:6. Douay-Rheims translates: 'he hath made a decree, and it shall not pass away'. Bede understands the verse differently.

41 Gen. 1:4, 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, 1:21, 1:25, and 1:31.

42 *Hebraica ueritas* is Bede's regular phrase, borrowed from Jerome (e.g. *Ep.* 49[48].19 [CSEL 54, 383], for the Hebrew texts that Jerome consulted for his translation in the Vulgate and for the Vulgate itself.

43 Gen. 1:31.

44 Jerome, *Ep.* 49(48).19 (CSEL 54, 383).

that first heaven and earth is expanded, hardened like ice and solidified like crystal. And the middle region of heaven and earth is shut off as it were by a firmament of this kind, and the Creator called this firmament 'heaven', so-called from the name of that older one, and thus he divided the fabric of the whole world, although it is one structure, into two regions. This was the reason for the division, so that the upper region would serve as a home for the angels and the lower for men.[45] I wanted to insert these things into my work, briefly, so that the reader may understand how far this is in accordance with the sense of the Fathers.

[1:9] God also said, Let the waters that are under the heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear. And it was so done. The waters which had filled up everything between heaven **/13/** and earth are drawn up and gathered together into one place, so that the light, which illumined the waters brightly in the two previous days, would shine more brightly in the pure air, and so that the earth, which lay hidden, would appear, and so that the same earth, which remained muddy and infirm as long as it was covered with waters, would be rendered by their withdrawal dry and fit for receiving offspring. But if anyone should ask where the waters were gathered together which had entirely covered all parts of the earth as far as to heaven, he should know that it could have happened that the earth itself, subsiding far and wide at the command of the Creator, provided other hollow parts, where the waters flowing together were received, so that the dry land appeared out of those parts from which moisture withdrew in order that dry land might be made. And also it is not unreasonable to believe that the primal waters, as I have mentioned above,[46] were rather attenuated, so that they covered the lands like clouds, but that they were thickened by being gathered together, so that they could be contained in the space that was given them, with dry land appearing in the remaining space. But although it is well known that there are many seas, nevertheless it says that the waters were gathered together into one place, because, of course, these are all joined together by an unbroken and continuous stream of water into the great ocean and the sea.[47] And although there are lakes that seem to be self-contained, even these are said to be pierced by certain hidden caverns so that their courses flow into the sea. And diggers of wells also prove by experience that the whole earth is filled with waters flowing through unseen veins which take their source from the sea.

45 Ps.-Clement/Rufinus, *Recognitiones* 1.27 (PG 1, 1222).

46 *In Gen.* 1.191-94 (above, p. 74).

47 I.e., the world ocean and the Mediterranean.

[1:10a/b] And God called the dry land earth; and the gathering together of the waters he called seas. Prior to the separation of the waters, God called this whole more solid part of the world, earth, when Scripture said, *In the beginning God created heaven and earth; and the earth was void and empty*.[48] But now, after the world begins to be formed at this time, and the face of the earth appears in its own place as the waters recede, in order to distinguish that part which was still covered with waters, the remaining part which was licensed to be dry received the name of earth. Earth [*terra*] is so-called in Latin, because it is rubbed smooth [*teratur*] by the feet of animals.[49] The gatherings of the waters are called seas, evidently in accordance with the greatest portion **/14/** of them. For they say that in Hebrew all gatherings of waters, whether salt or fresh, are called seas. And it is fitting that Scripture, which previously, on account of the unbroken extent of all the waters which are in the earth, said that they were gathered together into one place, now names the gatherings of the waters in the plural, and says that these are called seas in the plural, on account of their manifold bays, which themselves are also assigned various names according to regional terminology.

[1:10c] And God saw that it was good. Earth had not yet sprouted plants nor had it yet brought forth its own living creatures or those of the water, and nevertheless God is said to see *that it was good* that dry land had appeared from the receding waters. Because, of course, the Creator of water and *Judge of the whole world, foreseeing what will be, now praises as though they were perfect those things which are at this point in the beginning of the first work. This is not to be wondered at in one for whom the perfection of things is not in the completion of the work but in the predestination of his own will*.[50]

[1:11-13] And he said, Let the earth bring forth the green plant and such as may seed and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, which may have seed in itself upon the earth. And it was so done. And the earth brought forth the green plant and such as yields seed according to its kind and the tree that bears fruit and having seed each one according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day. It is clear from these words of God that the adornment of the world was accomplished in springtime, for that is the time when green plants usually appear on earth and trees are usually loaded with fruits. Likewise, it should be noted that the first shoots of the plants and the

48 Gen. 1:1-2.

49 Cf. Isidore, *Etym.* 14.1.1.

50 Ambrose, *Hex.* 2.5.21 (CSEL 32, 58).

trees did not appear from seed, but from the earth. For at the one command of the Creator, the earth, which appeared as dry land, was suddenly adorned with plants and clothed with blossoming groves, and each of these immediately produced fruits and seeds of its own kind from itself. It was proper in the beginning for every species of things to come forth at the Lord's command in perfect shape, in the same way as man **/15/** himself, for whom all things were made on earth, is also known to have been perfectly formed, that is, in the freshness of young manhood.[51]

[1:14a/b] And God said, Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven. The world proceeded in perfectly proper order from unformed matter to harmonious form. For after God created heaven, earth, and water before any day whatever of this age, that is, that higher and spiritual world with its inhabitants and the unformed matter of all this world, according to that which has been written, *He that lives forever created all things together*,[52] on the first day of this age he made light to render other created things capable of receiving form. On the second day he solidified the firmament of heaven, which is to say the upper part of this world, in the midst of the waters. On the third day in the lower parts he separated the sea and the lands into their places, and as the water yielded he diffused air into its place. Therefore it was proper that the elements should receive the benefit of fuller adornment in the same order in which they were created, that is, that on the fourth day, heaven should be adorned with lights; and that on the fifth day the air and the sea and on the sixth day the earth should be filled with their living creatures. For the fact that on the third day the earth was clothed with plants and trees pertains not to its adornment, but, if I may put it thus, to the superficial appearance of its form.[53]

[1:14a/c] Therefore **God said, Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven to divide the day and the night**. One may see by this division, which is more clearly explained in the following verses, that the sun gives light to the day and the moon and the stars to the night. For when the lights were made to augment the primordial light, it came about that even the night, which up to this point had known nothing except the ancient darkness,

51 Jones ('Bede's Commentary on Genesis', p. 117) calls this passage 'Bede's ode to spring and creation'. Jones emphasizes that for Bede, as opposed to Augustine, *natura* is not human nature but God's created world. 'It is not in Augustine's writings but in Bede's that a reader sees most clearly how Nature and Grace hang upon the *locus amoenus* of prelapsarian Eden'.

52 Ecclesiastes 18:1.

53 This slightly strained distinction suggests that Bede was not entirely comfortable with his argument; he had after all stated just above that the earth was adorned on the third day.

would advance full of light, illuminated either by the brilliance at least of the moon, or the stars, or both. For although the night very often seems dark and obscure to us, when the air which is next to the earth is obscured by cloudy turbulence, nevertheless that upper region which goes by the name of 'ether' is always rendered light on account of the brightness of the revolving lights. But along with the increase of light, the formation of the lights offered as a divine gift to the world the fact that they could mark off divisions in the flow of time. Hence, there follows:

[1:14d] And let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years. Because truly before the lights were made, there was not a distinction by the marks of which the order of times **/16/** might be noted; there was not a distinction by means of which the midday hour might be known, before

> The fiery sun ascended the middle of the sphere of heaven.[54]

There was not a distinction by means of which the other hours of the day and night might be designated, until the constellations divided the sky into equal parts by day and night. Therefore there are *lights for signs and for seasons and for days and years*, not because the seasons, which as we know arose in the beginning when God made heaven and earth, or because the days and years, which are known to have originated in God's words, *Let light be made, and light was made*,[55] began with their creation, but because the succession of seasons and days and years is marked by their risings and transits. For that whole period of three days had earlier passed in the undivided progress of its course, having internally no measurement of hours, since, when primordial light still filled everything generally and had no starting point, which it now receives from the sun, nowhere did rays of light shine too brightly, nor did any shade grow chill as though it had withdrawn too far under cliff or tree. But even leaving aside the marking of times, the lights are necessary as signs in the activities of this life. Sailors heed them in navigation, as does everyone travelling in the sandy deserts of Ethiopia, where all traces of the voyagers are levelled as soon as they are found by the very lightest puff of wind. And for that reason travellers in those regions no less than those who sail on the sea are in need of the signs of the lights by night and by day. Likewise, they are *for signs*, because by contemplating them we sometimes also foresee what the state of the weather is going to be.

[1:15] To shine in the firmament of heaven and to give light upon the earth. And it was so done. Indeed, the lights always shine in the firmament

54 Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.97 (Bede also quotes this verse in *DTR* 32).

55 Gen. 1:3.

of heaven, as I have said, and flood the places nearest to it in a bright light, but they illumine the earth at suitable times. For often the cloudy atmosphere offers an obstacle so that neither the light of the moon, when it is young, nor of the stars is visible on the earth. But the risen sun obstructs the moon and the stars with its greater light, so that they do not illumine the earth; **/17/** hence it takes its name [*sol*] in Latin, because it alone [*solus*] shines upon the earth by day, when the stars and the moon are dimmed.

[1:16a] And God made two great lights. We can consider the lights as great, not so much in comparison with other things as in their own function, like the great heaven and the great sea; for the sun which fills the world with its heat is great, as is the moon with its light. In whatever part of the heaven they may be, they illuminate everything and are seen equally by all. A visible proof of their magnitude is that their disc seems the same to everybody. For if it seemed lesser to persons located far off, and if it shone greater to persons standing closer, it would provide evidence of the smallness of its size.

[1:16b-17a] A greater light to rule the day and a lesser light to rule the night and the stars. And he set them in the firmament of heaven. *The greater light* is the sun, not only in the beauty of its body of whatever sort it is, but also in the magnitude of its light, by which it is thought to illuminate *the lesser light and the stars*. It is greater also by virtue of its heat, by which after it came into being it heated the world, since the latter had no heat at all in the days previous to the sun's creation. Moreover, from the fact that the moon is perceived to be of one and the same magnitude as the sun, it is said to be the case that the sun moves much farther and higher from the earth than the moon, and therefore that how great its size may be cannot be discerned by us who live on earth. For things placed at a greater distance always seem smaller.

It says, *And a lesser light to rule the night and the stars. And he set them in the firmament of heaven*, because, although it happens that the moon is seen every month in the day and even on rare occasions the greater stars, it is very certain that they never bring the solace of light to the day, but only to the night.

[1:17b-18b] To shine upon the earth and to rule the day and the night and to divide the light and the darkness. These words can only be understood both of the great lights and of the stars by making this distinction, that that the statement, *and to rule the day*, pertains specifically to the sun, and that the added phrase, *and the night*, pertains to the moon and the stars; but the appended clause, *and to divide the light and* **/18/** *the darkness*, applies equally well to all the heavenly bodies. Wherever these go, they bear their

light around with them, and where they are absent, they leave everything in darkness. But if someone asks what kind of daily light there could have been before the creation of the heavenly bodies, it is not wide of the mark to suppose that it would have been such as we see every day in the morning – that is, when the sunrise approaches but is not yet visible on earth and the rays of the stars are dimmed, the day shines indeed but still does not gleam brightly until the sun has risen. Hence, there could not have been any distinction of times, except of day and night alone, and it was rightly said after the lights were made, *and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years*.[56] For changes of times began to be discerned, when on the fourth day of the infant world the sun advancing from due east consecrated the vernal equinox at its rising.[57] And climbing in daily progressions to the highest point of the sky, and descending once more from the peak of the solstice gradually to the lowest point, returning again without a pause from the lowest region of winter to the equinoctial zone,[58] the sun completed the period of a year in the familiar four separate and distinct seasons and in the appointed number of days. When the full moon appeared in the evening, it prescribed by its first ascent the times which were to be observed in the celebration of Easter. Indeed, not only the ancient people of God [Israelites] but also we today keep as the first hour in the Easter observance the moment when the evening full moon (that is, the fourteenth day of the moon) appears in the face of heaven after the vernal equinox has passed. For when the following Sunday comes, the fit time for celebrating the resurrection of the Lord is at hand, which also fulfils to the letter the word of the Prophet, who said, *He has made the moon for seasons; the sun knows his going down*.[59] Also, apart from what I spoke of above,[60] that the stars show by their appearance what the weather will be like and by their course which watch of the night it is, the stars *are for signs and for seasons*, because some coming into the sky signify summer, and others signify winter. And they are *for days*, because some accompany the sun during the days of spring, and others during the days of autumn. And they are *for years* because the morning stars, which rise now, for example, in the **/19/** vernal equinox, come every year into the face of heaven in the same equinox; the stars, which rise now in the

56 Gen. 1:14.

57 The religious implications of the vernal equinox are underscored by Bede's choice of the term *consecrauit*, 'consecrated'. He spells out these implications below, and at greater length in *DTR* 6. See Introduction, pp. 33–34.

58 I.e., the equator. Cf. Bede, *DTR* 34.

59 Ps. 103:19 (104:19).

60 *In Gen.* 1.449-58 (above, p. 81).

solstice in the evening or morning, always rise in it at the same hours. But there are certain stars, which astronomers call planets, that is, wanderers, which make greater years by their orbit through which they return to the same place in the sky. For the star which is called Saturn is said to return in thirty solar years to the same region of the stars in which it had been before; Jupiter in twelve years; and Mars in two years.[61] And when the moon has revolved in its orbit twelve times, it makes a common year, that is, a year of 354 days, and to harmonize its revolutions with the solar year, in the third or even in the second year a thirteenth month is added. Computists call this an embolismic[62] year, and it is composed of 384 days.[63]

[1:18c] And God saw that it was good. *Holy Scripture necessarily repeats that God saw that what he made was good a number of times, so that the piety of the faithful may be informed from this not to judge of the visible and invisible creation according to human understanding, which is often offended even by good things of which it does not know the causes and order, but to believe in and submit to the God who approves it. For everyone makes progress the more easily in learning anything, the more devoutly he believed in God before he learned it. Therefore God saw that what he made was good, since the things that were to be made gave pleasure in the making, and having been made they gave pleasure in enduring, as far as the capacity of coming into existence or enduring had necessarily been assigned to each thing by so great an Artificer*.[64]

[1:19] The evening and morning were the fourth day. This is that evening to be remembered,[65] on which the people of God in Egypt offered the lamb in celebration of the Passover; this is the first morning that the people saw after the yoke of their long servitude had been struck off and the journey of freedom had been begun.[66] It is written that the Lord said to Moses: *This month shall be to you the beginning of months: it shall be the first in the*

61 These approximations are accurate. Saturn's orbital period is 29.5 years; Jupiter's is 11.86 years; Mars' is 687 days (1.88 years). Bede's source was Pliny, *NH* 2.6.32-35; cf. Bede, *DNR* 13.2-4 (CCSL 123A, 204).

62 That is, augmented.

63 Cf. Bede, *De temporibus liber* 9.4-6 (*BOT*, p. 298); *DTR* 36.7-15 (*BOT*, p. 249). In the latter work, Bede explains that the lunar year is called 'common' because two of them usually run successively. In the nineteen-year cycle for calculating Easter that Bede employed, there would be five pairs of common years and two single common years separated by seven embolismic years: see Wallis, Introduction, *The Reckoning of Time*, p. xlvi.

64 Augustine, *Contra aduersarium* 1.7.10 (CCSL 49, 43).

65 Cf. Exod. 12:14; 13:3.

66 Cf. Exod. 12:6-51.

months of the year. … On the tenth day of this month let every man take a lamb by **/20/** *their families and houses. … And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and the whole multitude of the children of Israel shall sacrifice it in the evening*.[67] With this evening, besides establishing the sacrament of the Passover, our Lord also initiated allegorically after the eating of the lamb the divine mysteries of his body and blood that we were to celebrate; with the dawn of this morning, *like an immaculate lamb* he redeemed us with his *blood*,[68] freeing us from the servitude of demonic rule. The day of the full moon fell on the fourth day of the creation of the world, but at the time of the Lord's passion, for the sake of a higher sacrament, it occurred on the fifth day of the week,[69] so that the Lord, who was crucified on the sixth day, might rest in the sepulchre on the sabbath itself,[70] and consecrate by his resurrection the first day of the week, and give to us also on that day on which light was made[71] the faith and hope of rising up from the dead and entering into eternal light.

[1:20] And God also said, Let the waters bring forth the creeping creature having life and the bird over the earth under the firmament of heaven. After the face of heaven was adorned with lights on the fourth day, portions of the lower world, namely, the waters and the air, were fittingly adorned on the fifth day with these creatures that move with the breath of life, because these elements are connected with each other and with heaven by a certain family relationship, as it were. They are linked with each other because the nature of the waters is very near to the quality of the air: hence air is shown to be *thickened* by waters' *vapours*, *so that* it forms clouds and *can sustain the flight of birds*.[72] Scripture bears witness that *the air on a sudden shall be thickened into clouds, and the wind shall pass and drive them away*.[73] And then, *it also drips dew throughout clear nights, the drops of which dew are found in the morning on the green plants*.[74] And they are linked in this way to heaven, because the air is so similar to it that it sometimes takes its name, as when Scripture calls those creatures that fly as we know in the air, *the birds of heaven*.[75] And the Lord himself, speaking of the manifestation of his

67 Exod. 12:2; 12:3; 12:6.
68 1 Peter 1:19.
69 *In quintam sabbati* = Thursday, the day of the Last Supper.
70 The sabbath is Saturday.
71 Sunday.
72 Augustine, *DGCM* 1.15.24 (CSEL 91, 90); cf. Bede, *DNR* 25.3.
73 Job 37:21.
74 Augustine, *DGCM* 1.15.24 (CSEL 91, 90); cf. Wisdom 11:23.
75 Cf. Gen. 1:26, etc.

powers to the multitudes, who did not know the time of his coming, says, *When you see a cloud rising* **/21/** *from the west, presently you say, A shower is coming, and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, There will be wind, and it comes to pass. You hypocrites, you know how to discern the face of the heaven and of the earth, but how is it that you do not discern this time?*[76] Here it is certain that he calls this state of the air, *the face of heaven*, for the sake of variety. Therefore, *God said, Let the waters bring forth the creeping creature having life and the bird over the earth under the firmament of heaven*. And lest by chance anyone should think that any species of flying or aquatic creatures was overlooked in this word of the Lord, because there are living creatures of the waters which move not by creeping, but by swimming or by walking with feet, and because there are among birds those that have feathers even though they lack all capacity for flight, it is carefully added:

[1:21a/d] And God created the great whales and every living and moving creature which the waters brought forth according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. Therefore, no species was excepted when *every living creature* of those *which the waters brought forth in their* various *kinds* was created along with the great whales – that is, not only creeping and swimming and flying creatures, but also those which, not being adapted for any form of locomotion, cling fast to the rocks, as is the case with many kinds of shellfish. Moreover, the statement, *and the bird over the earth under the firmament of heaven*,[77] offers no obstacle to the framework of truth, because indisputably birds which fly over the earth nevertheless fly under the starry heaven, although an immense space lies between, just as we humans, having been placed on earth, are truly and rightly said to have been created under heaven and the sun, as Scripture attests, which says that *there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation which is under heaven*.[78] And, *What has a man more of all his labour, that he takes under the sun?*[79] Admittedly, it bothers some people that it was said, according to another translation, *And flying creatures flying near the firmament,*[80] *that is, next to the firmament of heaven*.[81] But

76 Luke 12:54-56.

77 Gen. 1:20.

78 Acts 2:5.

79 Ecclesiastes 1:3.

80 Gen. 1:20 in the Old-Latin translation, as quoted by Ambrose, *Hex*. 5.22.73 (CSEL 32, 193).

81 Augustine, *DGAL* 3.7 (CSEL 28.1, 70).

it must be understood that it was said that birds fly under *the firmament of heaven* because the word 'firmament' also indicates the ether, that **/22/** is, that upper region of the air which extends from this stormy, *foggy region in which birds fly* as far as the stars, and which is believed, not im*plausibly*, to be absolutely *calm* and full of light.[82] Furthermore, Scripture stated that the seven planets which are said to wander in this region of the ether were set in the firmament of heaven.[83] And therefore birds are rightly said to fly *near the firmament of heaven*, because this turbulent region of the air which sustains the flight of birds is next to the ether, as I have said. Nor should it be wondered at, if ether is called the firmament of heaven, when air is called heaven, as I have shown above.[84] And neither should it be overlooked that when *God* was said to have *created every living creature*, the phrase *and moving*[85] was added, in contrast, that is to say, to man, whom God was about to make in his own image and likeness, so that if he should keep his commandments, he would live blessed with perpetual immutability. For in the first creation the other living creatures were made immediately in such a way that either they would die as nourishment for others or they would perish in their declining age from the lack of same.

[1:21e-23] And God saw that it was good. And he blessed them, saying, Increase and multiply and fill the waters of the sea, and let the birds be multiplied upon the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. God's command, *Increase and multiply and fill the waters of the sea*, pertains to both kinds of living things made from the waters, that is, to fish and to birds, because just as no fish can live except in the waters, so there are many birds which, although they occasionally rest on land and give birth there to their young, feed not just from the land but also from the sea and use their marine habitations more willingly than their terrestrial ones. But what he adds, *and let the birds be multiplied upon the earth*, refers to both kinds of birds, that is, those that feed from the waters and those that feed from the land, because even those birds which are unable to live without the waters, so that they often lie hidden for much of the year under the depths of the waters like fish, normally come up onto the land at times, especially when they are breeding and feeding their chicks. **/23/**

82 Adapted from Augustine, *DGAL* 3.7 (CSEL 28.1, 70).

83 Gen. 1:16-17.

84 *In Gen.* 1.594-97 (above, p. 85).

85 Souter (s.v.) calls *motabilis* 'probably only miswriting of *mutabilis*'. Apparently it is found only in Jerome and the Vulgate. At any rate, Bede assumes that it connotes 'mutable' as well as 'moving'.

[1:24] And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature in its kind, cattle and creeping things and beasts according to their kinds. And it was so done, after heaven was illuminated with the heavenly bodies, after the air, which, as I have said,[86] from its proximity deserved to be called heaven, was filled with flying creatures, and after the waters, which themselves were also connected with the air by a great affinity of nature, were enriched with their living creatures. Hence, the earth received living creatures from them, and it takes from them rain, snow, hail, and other things of this kind. The consequence was that the earth was also filled with its own living things, that is, creatures born from itself. For the earth itself has a special relationship with the waters, since it cannot make the soil fertile without their sap and watering, but neither can it exist on its own, as Peter attests, who says *that the heavens were before, and the earth out of water, and through water, consisting by the word of God*.[87] Therefore, God commands the earth to bring forth *cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth*, because we know that the word 'beasts' in fact comprehends all those that rage with mouth or claws, with the exception of serpents, and under the name of 'creeping things of the earth' serpents are also included. But the word 'cattle' designates those animals that were meant for the use of men. Accordingly, it is there where the creation of other four-footed animals, such as deer, roe deer, buffalo, goats, and others of this kind,[88] is described, unless perhaps I should have said that these were also reckoned with the 'beasts' on account of the ferocity of their untamed spirit. According to the admittedly old translation, in which it is written, *let the earth thrust forth the living creature according to its kind, four-footed animals, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth*,[89] there is no question at all that by the term 'four-footed animals' was comprehended all those that the earth brought forth, except beasts and creeping things – both those under human care and those that are wild and untamed.

[1:25a/b] And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and cattle and every creeping thing of the earth after its kind. The change of wording should be noted, because it was said above that God commanded the earth *to bring forth the cattle and creeping things and*

86 *In Gen.* 1.594-97 (above, p. 85).

87 2 Peter 3:5.

88 Cf. Deut. 14:4-5.

89 Gen. 1:24 in the Old-Latin translation. Augustine gives two slightly different versions of this verse in *DGAL* 3.11 (CSEL 28.1, 74) and *DGCM* 1.16.25 (CSEL 91, 91), which, if blended, would correspond to Bede's wording.

beasts of the earth,[90] but now with the order changed God is said to have *made the beasts of the earth,* **/24/** *the cattle, and every creeping thing of the earth*. It must be understood that everything that he wanted came into existence faster than speech. It matters not at all what human speech names first in the class of created things that divine power fashioned collectively all at once. But since this follows:

[1:25c] And God saw that it was good, it is deservedly asked why there is not also added here concerning these living things what was said about the things which the waters had brought forth, *and he blessed them, saying, increase and multiply and fill the earth*.[91] Is it not very probable that what Scripture pointed out that God said about the first creation of life was left for us to understand also about the second, especially since he was going to add many other things in the works of this day? Further on, Scripture necessarily took care to repeat this about the creation of man, saying, *And God blessed them and said, Increase and multiply and fill the earth*,[92] lest anyone should think that sin was present in that honourable marriage and that the marriage bed was to be coupled with filth and fornication.

But after the habitation of the earth had been made and adorned, it remained for the inhabitor and lord of things himself to be created, for whose sake all things were ordained; and this follows:

[1:26a/b] And he said, Let us make man in our image and likeness. Now it appears more clearly why it was said of the created green plants and trees, fish and birds, and terrestrial animals that they were made separately according to their classes and kinds. For the future creation was foreseen of him who would not only be suited to his own kind in likeness and appearance, but would also be made in the image and likeness of his Creator. This also gives testimony to the nobility of his creation, that God did not say, as he did in his other creatures, 'Let man be made, and man was made', or 'let the earth bring forth man, and the earth brought forth man'. *But before he was made, it is said, 'let us make man', so that it would truly seem that he was formed as a rational creature, as though made with deliberation.* **/25/** *He is formed from the earth as if by study, and he is raised up by the breath of the Creator through the power of the vital Spirit, evidently so that he who was made in the image of the Creator would exist not by a word of command but by the dignity of an action*.[93]

90 Gen. 1:24.
91 Gen. 1:22.
92 Gen. 1:28.
93 Gregory, *Moralia* 9.49.75 (CCSL 143, 509).

And when it is said, *Let us make man in our image and likeness*, the unity of the holy Trinity is clearly proclaimed. Since the same indivisible Trinity was revealed mystically in the preceding act of creation, when it was said, *And God said, let it be made … And God made … And God saw that it was good*,[94] it is now made known more openly, when it is said, *Let us make man in our image and likeness*. And rightly, because *as long as* he *who was to be taught* did not exist, *the proclamation of the divine nature was hidden in the depths; but when the creation of man was expected, the faith was revealed and the doctrine of the truth shown forth*.[95] For the expression, *Let us make*, connotes one action of three persons; but the following phrase, *in our image and likeness*, indicates the one and equal substance of the same holy Trinity. For how would *image and likeness* be one, if the Son were less than the Father, if the Holy Spirit were less than the Son, or if the glory of the whole Trinity were not of the same consubstantial power? Or how would it be possible for *Let us make* to be said, if there were not cooperative[96] power in one divine nature of three persons? Nor could God have said, *Let us make man in our image and likeness*, to the angels, because there is no reason at all for us to believe that the image and likeness of God and the angels is one and the same.

Moreover, the Apostle is a witness as to how man was made in the image and likeness of God, when he sagaciously reminds us that this condition which we lost in our first parent we recovered in ourselves by the grace of the same Creator. *Be renewed in the spirit of your mind*, he says, *and put on the new man, who is created after God in justice, holiness, and truth*.[97] Therefore Adam, the new man, was created from earth after God, so that he was just, **/26/** holy, and true, subject to and humbly dependent upon the grace of his Creator, who is eternally and perfectly just, holy, and true. And since he corrupted this most beautiful newness of the divine image in himself by sinning, and engendered the corrupt family of the human race from himself, there came the second Adam, that is, the Lord himself and our Creator, born from the Virgin, created imperishably and without change in the image of God, free of all fault and full of all grace and truth, in order to restore his

94 Evidently, Bede takes the triple sequence, 'God said', 'God made', 'God saw', to signify the Trinity. The full sequence does not, in fact, appear in this exact wording in any of the six days of creation – the nearest thing to it being day four.

95 Basil/Eust., *In Hex.* 9.6 (PL 53, 964).

96 The fem. noun *cooperatrix* (s.v., Blaise, Souter) is used in asyndetic parallel with *uirtus* ('fellow-worker [and] power' = 'cooperative power').

97 Eph. 4:23-24.

image and likeness in us by his example and gifts. For he is truly the new man created after God, because without doubt he took the true substance[98] of the flesh from Adam so that he would inherit from him no sordid vice. To follow his example according to our understanding, to depend upon his gifts, to comply with his commandments, this is to recover in the new man the image of God that we lost in the old man. Therefore, man *was created in the likeness of God not after the body, but after the understanding of the mind. And yet he has in the body itself a certain property which also indicates this, since he was made with an erect posture, so that he would be reminded by this very fact that he is not to take after animals of the earth, like cattle, whose whole pleasure is from the earth. Hence, all animals go face down and prostrate on their belly*,[99] as one of the poets very beautifully and truly said:

> And while all other animals, face down, look at the earth,
> He gave to man an uplifted face, and ordered him
> To view the heavens and raise his upright countenance to the stars.[100]

Therefore his body is suited to a rational soul, not in accordance with the features and shapes of his limbs, but rather in accordance with that which was lifted up into the sky for the sake of contemplating the celestial objects which are in the body of the world itself, just as the rational soul ought to be lifted up to those things which especially excel by their nature in spiritual qualities, in order that it may 'mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth'.[101] And Scripture appropriately adds: **/27/**

[1:26c/e] And let him have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of heaven and the beasts and the whole earth and every creeping creature that moves upon the earth. Because there is no doubt that man was made in the image of God chiefly in the respect in which he surpasses the irrational creatures – that is to say, he was created capable of reason, by which means he could both properly govern each and every created thing in the world and enjoy the knowledge of the One who created all things.[102] *Having been placed in this position of dignity, if he does not understand*

98 The 'true substance of the flesh' [*ueram … carnis substantiam*] refers to Adam as he was created 'in the image and likeness of God' before he sinned.

99 Augustine, *DGAL* 6.12 (CSEL 28.1, 187).

100 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.84-86 (frequently quoted in the context of arguments similar to Bede's, as by Isidore, *Etym*. 11.1.5).

101 Augustine, *DGAL* 6.12 (CSEL 28.1, 187), quoting Col. 3:2.

102 As Jones ('Bede's Commentary on Genesis', p. 117) points out, Bede stresses that man is separately created with reason, which gives him to right to rule the animals.

that he should behave well, he will be put in the same class with those same irrational animals *over which he was exalted*,[103] just as the Psalmist declares.[104]

[1:27a/b] And God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him. Scripture duplicated what it first said, *in his own image*, by adding for the sake of confirmation, *in the image of God he created him*, in order the more thoroughly to impress upon us in what condition we were created by God and the more deeply to implant in our minds the hope of recovering the image of God, lest we who walk in the image of God be needlessly disquieted, amassing treasure *in the uncertainty of riches*.[105] But rather let us wait for the Lord, thirsting for the time when we may come and appear before his face, certain that when he appears we will be like to him, because we will see him as he is. The fact *that it now says, 'in the image of God* he created him*', when it says above, '*let us make [man] *in our image', signifies not that the plurality of Persons does it so that we may believe in many gods, but so that we may understand Father and Son and Holy Spirit, on account of which Trinity it says, 'in our image', and that we may understand one God, for which reason it says, 'in the image of God'*.[106]

[1:27c] Male and female he created them. It is explained more fully in what follows whence and how God made the first man and woman. But now for the sake of brevity they are only reported to have been created, so that the work of the sixth day and the consecration of the seventh along with other matters may be expounded; and thus, as occasion demands, both this and other things that have been omitted but are worthy of mention **/28/** may be spoken of more freely.[107] In the first place, unlike the other animals which he created in their separate kinds not individually but many at a time, God created one male and one female, so that by this the bond of love might bind the human race more tightly to one another, because it remembered that it all arose from one parent. For the sake of this unity, when Holy Scripture said, *And God created man, in the image of God he created him*, and followed this immediately with, *male and female he created them*, it declined to add, 'in the image of God he created them'. For the female also was created in the image of God, on account of the fact that she too had a rational mind. But

103 Augustine, *DGAL* 6.12 (CSEL 28.1, 186).

104 Cf. Ps. 48:13 (49:12); 48:21 (49:20).

105 1 Tim. 6:17.

106 Augustine, *DGAL* 3.19 (CSEL 28.1, 85–86).

107 This is Bede's explanation of the fact that there is a second, more extensive, account of the creation of mankind yet to come in Gen. 2:7-23. See Introduction, p. 43.

Scripture did not consider that this needed to be added about her, because it left this to be understood about her as well on account of the oneness of their union. Indeed, it signified that this was to be understood about the entire human race which was born from them. For even now, insofar as every man uses reason, he has the image of God in him, for which reason John says, *That was the true light, which enlightens every man that comes into this world*.[108] For that is the same light of which the Psalmist glories in the Lord, saying, *The light of your countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us*.[109] It is entirely appropriate that male and female are described here as having been created, although the method of that creation is not yet stated, so that a suitable place may be had for the word of divine blessing, which is contained in the following:

[1:28a/b] And he blessed them and said, Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it. Indeed, this multiplication of men and filling of the earth could not be achieved except through the union of male and female. But if the human race grows and multiplies with the blessing of God, how much do they deserved to be cursed, who forbid marriage and condemn the arrangement of the heavenly decree as if it had been invented by the devil? Therefore marriage, which the grace of the divine blessing instituted for the propagation of the human race and the filling of the earth, must not be condemned. But more to be honoured and worthy of a greater blessing is virginity, which, after the earth has been filled with men, longs with chaste **/29/** mind and body to follow the Lamb wherever it goes, that is, to follow the Lord Jesus in heaven and sing him a new song,[110] which no one else can do. For God, our Lord, who in the beginning of the infant world formed the female from the side of the male to teach that the earth was to be filled by their mutual union, himself in the fullness of time took from the flesh of a virgin the form of a man, free from all pollution, perfected by the whole plenitude of divinity, in order to show that he prized the glory of virginity more than marriage.[111]

[1:28c/d] And rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of heaven and all living creatures that move upon the earth. It is proper to ask for what profit man received dominion over fish and birds and all the living creatures of the earth, and for what uses or comforts these were created for man, if

108 John 1:9.

109 Ps. 4:7 (4:6).

110 Cf. Ps. 95:1 (96:1); 97:1 (98:1); 149:1; Isa. 42:10.

111 Jones (Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. viii, n. 16) describes this paragraph (*In Gen.* 1.852-71) as suggesting ‘pulpit rhetoric’.

he never sinned, since the sequel of this passage declares that in the first creation they were not granted to him for food but only the green plants and the fruits of the trees.[112] But perhaps it could be said that God foreknew that man would sin, and by sinning that he, whom God created immortal, would become mortal, and therefore that God instituted these comforts for him in the beginning, by which he as a mortal could care for his own fragility, gaining from them, that is to say, both nourishment and clothing and assistance in labour and travel. It is not proper to ask why man does not still rule over all living creatures, for after he would not submit himself to his Creator, he lost dominion over those whom the Creator had subjected to his jurisdiction. Finally, as evidence of the first creation, we read not only that birds have rendered obedience to saints humbly serving God, but also that they have been spared from the yawning jaws of wild beasts, and that the poison of serpents has been unable to harm them.[113]

[1:29-30c] And God said: Behold I have given you every plant bearing seed upon the earth and all trees that have in themselves seed of their own kind to be your meat, and to all beasts of the earth and to every bird and to all that move upon /30/ the earth and wherein there is life, that they may have to feed upon. Now here it is clear that before the sin of man earth produced nothing harmful – no poisonous plant, no unfruitful tree. Since it is plainly said that *every plant* and *all trees* were given to men and to birds and to all the living creatures of the earth for food, it is clear that those birds did not live by stealing the food of weaker animals, nor did *the wolf search out an ambush around the sheepfold*,[114] nor was *the dust the serpent's food*,[115] but all things in harmony fed upon the green plants and the fruits of the trees.

112 Cf. Gen. 1:29-30.

113 For Bede, the hermit returning to the desert wilderness stands as a pattern of the monastic effort to recover a state of prelapsarian innocence. See Schapiro, 'The Religious Meaning of the Ruthwell Cross', pp. 161–63; Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', p. 117. For birds rendering obedience to saints, see Bede's (prose) *Vita S. Cuthberti*, chaps. 12, 20.

114 Vergil, *Georg*. 3.537. Blair ('From Bede to Alcuin', p. 249) comments: 'But where the received text of *Georg*. III, 537 reads *explorat*, Bede has *explorabat*. The resultant destruction of the metre leads one to wonder whether Bede even knew that this was a Virgilian hexameter or whether he had simply derived the line in this form from some other so far unidentified source'.

115 Isa. 65:25. This is a curious choice of example, because in Isaiah it is part of the prophecy of a new heaven and a new earth in which '[the] wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion and the ox shall eat straw; and dust shall be the serpent's food: they shall not hurt nor kill in all my holy mountain, says the Lord'.

Of course, in all this there arises a question, which ought not to be overlooked, as to how man was made immortal in contrast to other living creatures, and nevertheless took earthly nourishment in common with them. In this regard, we should observe that the immortality of the flesh that we received in the first creation in Adam is one thing, and the immortality that we hope we will receive in resurrection through Christ is another. Adam was certainly created immortal, in the sense that he could not die if he did not sin; but if he sinned, he would die.[116] But the children of resurrection will be immortal, since they will be equal to the angels of God in that they can neither die nor sin again.[117] And therefore after resurrection our flesh needs no nourishing refection, since no deficiency from hunger or weariness or any other weakness whatever is in store for it. But before his sin Adam's flesh was created immortal so that, with the aid and support of temporal nourishment, he would be free of death and pain, until he was brought by bodily sustenance to the age determined upon by the Creator. Then, after fathering offspring, he would presently, at the Creator's command, take many things of this kind from the tree of life. Having been made perfectly immortal by this, he would require no further support of corporeal food. Therefore the flesh of the first human beings was created immortal and incorruptible so that they might preserve that same immortality and incorruptibility of theirs by keeping the commands of God. And among these commands was this, **/31/** that they should eat from the lawful trees of paradise, but that they should refrain from eating from the forbidden tree. By eating of the former, they would preserve the gift of immortality bestowed upon them; in contact with the latter, they would find the bane of death. Thus, in the end our flesh will assuredly be incorruptible and immortal in order that it may always remain in the same state like the sublimity of the angels, and so that it cannot be in need of corporeal food, which to be sure will not exist in the spiritual life. For as to the fact that we read that angels ate with the patriarchs, they acted not from need, but out of kindness, so that by doing this they would meet more agreeably with the men to whom they appeared.[118] The Lord also ate with his disciples after his resurrection, not as being in need of refreshment, but in order to show that he had received real flesh after death.

[1:30d] And it was so done. That is, it was done in order that man should rule all things that were created on earth and in the waters and in order that

116 Cf. Augustine, *DCD* 22.30 (CCSL 48, 864).

117 Cf. Luke 20:36.

118 Cf. Gen. 18:1-9.

he should gain the means and power of eating from the fruits of the earth with the birds of heaven and the animals of the earth.

[1:31a] And God saw all the things that he made, and they were very good. Since it was said separately about the separate works of God that he saw that they were good,[119] after everything was accomplished it is rightly set down at the end with the additional remark that *he saw all the things that he made, and they were very good*. But it is *deservedly asked*, why was it not *separately* added concerning the creation of man, *'And God saw that it was good',* instead of reserving his creation for general praise with the others? *Perhaps because God foreknew that man would sin and that he would not remain in the perfection of his own image, he did not want to say that he was good separately but with the others, as if intimating what was to be. … Therefore man was good before sin and in his own kind, certainly, but Scripture omitted to say this, in order instead to say that which foretold that something else would be. … For God is the perfect creator of the things of nature, but the most just* **/32/** *regulator of sinners, so that, even if some deformities are made separately by sinning, nevertheless with them the sum of things is always beautiful.*[120]

[1:31b-2:1] And the evening and morning were the sixth day. So the heavens and the earth were finished and all the ornamentation of them. It is well known that the number six is perfect because it is the first number made up of its own factors, namely, its sixth part which is one and its third part which is two and its half part which is three. For one and two and three make six. You will nowhere find anything of the kind except this among the unit numbers, and not among numbers in the tens except the number twenty-eight.[121] Therefore God completed all the ornamentation of heaven and earth in six days, so that he who constituted *all things in measure, and number, and weight*[122] might teach even by the very number of days in which he worked that his works had been perfected.[123]

[2:2a] And on the seventh day God completed his work which he had made. In another translation it is stated that *God finished in the sixth day his works which he made*.[124] This does not occasion any dispute at all, because

119 Gen. 1:4; 1:10; 1:12; 1:18; 1:21; 1:25.

120 Augustine, *DGAL* 3.24 (CSEL 28.1, 91–92).

121 1 + 2 + 4 + 7 + 14 = 28.

122 Wisdom 11:21.

123 Cf. Augustine, *DCD* 11.30 (CCSL 48, 350); *DGAL* 4.2 (CSEL 28.1, 94–98); *De Trinitate* 4.4.7 (CCSL 50, 169–70); Bede, *DTR* 8.9-15 (*BOT*, pp. 195–96).

124 The Old-Latin, as cited frequently in Augustine (e.g., *DGAL* 4.1 [CSEL 28.1, 93]) and elsewhere.

the things that were done in that day are set forth in a clear descriptive narrative. But it is proper to ask how it is possible that our edition [Jerome's Vulgate], which descends from the fountain of the Hebrew Truth, should say that *God completed on the seventh day his work which he had made*, on which day he is not stated to have created anything new, unless indeed we should say that he then made the seventh day itself and that he finished his work in the making of it, because with that done he completed the measure and number of the days, by the revolution of which all the ages would advance from that time to the end. For in the revolution of times the eighth day is counted the same as the first.[125]

Therefore *on the seventh day God completed his work which he had made*, because in it he put a limit to the sum total of the days which he had made with the addition of that seventh day which he wished to be called and to be the sabbath,[126] because he endowed it above other days with his mystical blessing and sanctification, as the following verses teach. Hence also, because the day of Judgement and of the consummation **/33/** of time will come after the seventh day, it is called the octave in the Scriptures, clearly because only seven days preceded it.[127] For it was said in a title of Psalms, *Unto the end, in hymns, for the octave, a psalm for David*.[128] That this was written of the day of Judgement the entire text of the following Psalm teaches, in which the Prophet, fearing the wrath of the judge who is to come, exclaims, *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath, nor chastise me in thy indignation*,[129] and so forth. But also although the day of the Lord's resurrection would come after a great many thousands of days, nevertheless it was also called the octave in the title of another Psalm, because it certainly followed the seventh day so that it would be the first day of the following week, that is, the very same day on which, *In the beginning … God said, Let*

125 The week is regarded as a divinely instituted period of time, like the day, the lunar month, and the year.

126 That is, Saturday.

127 Cf. Bede, *DTR* 71.56-91 (CCSL 123B, 543–44). In the discussion that follows, each day stands for an age. Bede is invoking his favourite doctrine of the Six (or Seven or Eight) Ages of the World (see below, n. 149).

128 Ps. 6:1.

129 Ps. 6:2. Bede, perhaps quoting from memory, takes his word order (*in ira tua … in furore tuo*, Bede; *in furore tuo … in ira tua*, *Iuxta LXX*) from Ps. 37:2, in which the key word *ira* is placed first. Cf. Bede, *DTR* 10.45-50 (*BOT*, p. 202), where he also takes the order of Ps. 37:2. For patristic interpretation of Psalm 6 in connection with the Six Ages, see Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 195–97.

there be light, and light was made.[130] And indeed that this Psalm was written about the resurrection of the Lord is proved by the very one who speaks in it, saying, *By reason of the misery of the needy, and the groans of the poor, now will I arise, says the Lord*.[131]

Moreover, it can properly be understood that *on the seventh day God completed his work which he had done*, even on that very day which *he blessed and sanctified*.[132] For it is not the case that blessing and sanctification is no work, just as Solomon must not be said to have done no work when he dedicated the temple that he had made.[133] On the contrary, it is an outstanding work of God when he glorified those things which he made with an eternal blessing and sanctification. Finally, concerning the work which he does on the eternal day of the week,[134] he himself says in the parable of the faithful servants, *Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them recline at the table, and passing will minister unto them*.[135] For he who girds himself, who prepares the table for them to recline at, who passes, and who ministers, is certainly working. But nonetheless, by all these words nothing else is intimated than that the Lord blesses and sanctifies his saints forever, that is, he rewards them with the vision of his glory which he gave them for their good works.

[2:2b] And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. God did not rest after having completed the fabric of the world as if **/34/** after the fashion of human weakness he were weary from too much work; rather he is said to have rested from all his work, because he ceased from the further introduction of any new creature. For Scripture is frequently accustomed to indicate the cessation of work or speech by the word 'rest'. So, for example, in the Apocalypse, it says of the holy animals,[136] *And they rested not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty*.[137]

130 Gen. 1:1; 1:3. Bede has now firmly established that the first day of creation was a Sunday.

131 Ps. 11:6 (12:5).

132 Gen. 2:3.

133 Cf. 1 Kings/3 Kings 8:63.

134 That is, the eighth age.

135 Luke 12:37.

136 The holy animals are the lion, calf, man, and eagle (Rev. 4:6-9), who were interpreted as being, among other things, symbols of the four evangelists. The identifications which became customary in the Middle Ages, above all in the visual arts, were the lion = Mark, the calf = Luke, the man = Matthew, and the eagle = John. Bede, however, in *Expositio Apocalypseos* 1.5.62-79 (CCSL 121A, 281–83), follows Augustine in equating the lion with Matthew and the man with Mark (the calf and the eagle being Luke and John).

137 Rev. 4:8.

This is as much to say, 'they never ceased singing these things'. For the chief and only rest for the saints in heaven is to utter the praise of the most high Trinity, which is God, in an unwearied voice.

But that God rested from all his works can be understood more profoundly: not that he had need of those works of his in which to rest – he whose true rest, indeed, is always in himself without beginning or end – , but that he made the works which rested in him solely on account of his goodness. Conversely, this is more easily understood when we remember the need of man to apply himself to his daily labours especially so that he can gain rest in his works, since the Lord says to him, *in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread*.[138] But God himself, who had perfect rest in himself eternally before the creation, after creating the world also rested, not in the works which he made, but from all the works which he made, as might be expected, having no need in himself to rest in his creatures, but rather himself offering rest to the rational creatures, since he always rests perfectly in himself, and he is blessed with that good which belongs to him.[139]

[2:3a] And he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. He did this namely with that blessing and sanctification which he revealed more fully to his people in the Law, saying, *Remember that you keep holy the sabbath day. Six days shall you labour, and shall do all your works. But on the seventh of the sabbath of the Lord your God, you shall do no work*.[140] And a little further on, *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and sanctified it*.[141] Truly this blessing and sanctification of the seventh day was done as a type of a greater blessing and sanctification. For just as **/35/** the blood of the Lord's passion, which had to be poured out once for the salvation of the world, was signified by the frequent, indeed, daily sacrifices under the Law, so also by the rest of the seventh day,[142] which always used to be celebrated after the works of the six days, was prefigured that great day of the sabbath, on which the Lord was to rest once in the grave, after having completed and perfected on the sixth day[143] all his works, by which he restored the world, long since lost,

138 Gen. 3:19.

139 The 'more profound' understanding that Bede develops in this paragraph rests on a linguistic distinction between resting *in* something and resting *from* something. God rests *in* himself, but *from* his works; man rests *in* God, and *in* but not *from* his labours.

140 Exod. 20:8-10.

141 Exod. 20:11.

142 That is, Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.

143 That is, Good Friday.

which he had completed on the sixth day.[144] On that day also, being mindful, as it were, of the old work, he declared in clear language that he had now completed the salvation of the world. *For when he had taken the vinegar, he said, It is consummated. And bowing his head, he gave up the ghost*.[145] But also this sanctification and blessing of the seventh day, and the rest of God on that day after his works, signified that they were exceedingly good, because each of us after good works, which he himself *works in* us *both to will and to accomplish*,[146] struggles toward the rest of heavenly life in which we may enjoy his eternal sanctification and blessing. Hence it is proper that this seventh day is not described as having had an evening, because it truly signifies our eternal rest in it.

[2:3a/b] And he blessed, it says, **the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made**. That is, after completing the adornment of the world, he had rested from undertaking any more new kinds of things. Nor should that be considered contrary to this statement, which he himself makes in the Gospel, *My Father works until now, and I work*.[147] He was replying, of course, to those who, on account of the rest of God which was commended in ancient times by the authority of this Scripture, complained that he did not observe the sabbath. For he had rested on the seventh day from forming the species of creation, because since then he has not formed any new ones. But from then until now he works at the governance of those same species which were instituted at that time, so that his sovereign power did not rest from governing heaven and earth and all the things that he had created even on that seventh day itself; otherwise they would immediately fall into ruin.

[The Six Ages of the World[148]]

Let it suffice to have spoken thus far of the beginnings of the infant world according to the literal sense. But I want to make clear, briefly, that **/36/** the order of those six or seven days in which it was created is also in harmony with the same number of its ages.[149] Now the first day, on which God said,

144 That is, the sixth day of creation.

145 John 19:30.

146 Philipp. 2:13.

147 John 5:17. On the potential conflict between this verse and Gen. 2:2 ('and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done') and its resolution in the Latin Genesis tradition, see O'Loughlin, *Teachers and Code-Breakers*, pp. 274–93 (for Bede, p. 289).

148 Jones's rubric in his edition of *On Genesis* (i.e., not in the MSS of the work).

149 On Bede's conception of the Six (or Seven or Eight) Ages of the World and its roots in patristic thinking, see Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 191–98; Siniscalco, 'Le

Let light be made, and light was made,[150] corresponds to the first age, in the beginning of which this same world was made and man was placed in the delights of the *paradise of pleasure*,[151] where, free and ignorant of all evils, he might enjoy the immediate grace of his Creator. But this day now began to decline toward evening when the first created humans lost the happiness of their heavenly country by sinning, and were sent forth into this *vale of tears.*[152] This was also signified by the hour of that time, when Adam, after the fault of the transgression, *heard the Lord walking in paradise at* the hour *after midday*.[153] The Lord walked indeed to signify that he had withdrawn from man, in whose heart he had remained quiet; and he did this at the hour *after midday* in order for man to learn that the light of divine knowledge and the fervour of divine love was diminished in him. But the full evening of this day arrived when the whole *earth was corrupted* by the increasingly frequent sins of the human race *before God, and was filled with iniquity*,[154] to such an extent that all flesh, except those creatures which he had shut in the ark, deserved to be destroyed in the flood.

On the second day was made *a firmament in the midst of the waters*;[155] and in the second age of the world the ark, in which was preserved what was left of the human race and, as I would put it, the seed of the following ages, was placed *in the midst of the waters*, which *all the ruptured fountains of the deep* eagerly poured out on the one side and *the opened flood gates of heaven*[156]

età del mondo in Beda', pp. 297–332; Davidse, 'The Sense of History in the Works of Bede', pp. 662–66; Wallis, Commentary, *The Reckoning of Time*, pp. 353–66. Bede's primary sources were Augustine, *DCD* 22.30 (CCSL 48, 865–66) and Isidore, *Etym*. 5.38.5. Augustine's formulation of the doctrine was seminal: see Green's remarks in the LCL edition of *The City of God*, vol. 5, Introduction, pp. ix–x. According to Bede, the First Age was from Adam to Noah, the Second from Noah to Abraham, the Third from Abraham to David, the Fourth from David to the Babylonian exile, the Fifth from the Babylonian exile to the nativity of Christ, and the Sixth from the nativity of Christ to the present and beyond to the day of Judgement. Outside the Six Ages of this world lay the Seventh Age of the corporeal rest of the Saints after death and at the end of time, after Last Judgement, the Eighth Age of eternal peace in the heavenly home. Cf. Bede, *DTR* 66 (CCSL 123B, 463–64).

150 Gen. 1:3.

151 Cf. Gen. 2:8; 2:15.

152 Cf. Ps. 83:7 (84:6).

153 Gen. 3:8. Taking his cue, perhaps, from the fortuitous resemblance of *aura* and *hora*, Bede seems to have glossed the biblical phrase *ad auram post meridiem* as *ad horam post meridiem* in order to bring out the spiritual meaning of the hour of the day for Adam. When he comes to Gen. 3:8 in its proper place below, he quotes it according to the Vulgate.

154 Gen. 6:11.

155 Gen. 1:6.

156 Gen. 7:11.

poured out on the other. But this day declined toward evening after the nations, forgetful both of the very recent anger and of the mercy of God, had devoted themselves to the building of the tower of pride; and it acquired full evening, when the fellowship of the human race was torn asunder by the confounding of languages.[157]

On the third day, when the waters had flowed together into their own places, dry land appeared, and immediately it was clothed with green plants and leafy groves.[158] And in the beginning of the third age, when the idolatrous nations, *whose wandering, unsteady and blown about as if by all the winds by the empty doctrines of idols, is well* **/37/** *signified by the word 'sea',*[159] were separated into their own places, the seed of the patriarchs was parted from fellowship with them and fructified with spiritual fruit, when the Lord said to Abraham, *Go forth out of your country and from your kindred and out of your father's house into the land which I shall show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you*, and so forth to the point where he says, *and in you shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed*.[160] In this nation, that is to say, the separated orders of the faithful appeared like the green plants and the fruit-bearing trees from one and the same earth, receiving the heavenly rain of divine eloquence. But this day also began to decline toward evening, when the same Israelite nation, abandoning both the faith of the patriarchs and the sacred rites of the Law that had been given them, was not only defiled by the crimes of foreign nations but also weighed down by slavery. Soon evening descended, when that nation, together with the king whom, disregarding God, it had chosen for itself, was almost completely destroyed by the sword of foreigners.

On the fourth day the heavens received lights, and in the fourth age the aforementioned people of God were made conspicuous with new fame by the reign of David and Solomon and of other kings ruling with the approval of God, by that very celebrated temple which Solomon built for God, by the prophecies[161] of the prophets, which did not cease to flourish during all the

157 Cf. Gen. 11:1-9.

158 Cf. Gen. 1:9; 1:11.

159 Augustine, *DGCM* 1.23.37 (CSEL 91, 105). Augustine compares the third day, when the earth was separated from the waters (= the sea), to the third age when Abraham was separated from the idolatrous nations (which he compares to the wave-tossed sea). The force of the comparison is a bit obscured in Bede's version.

160 Gen. 12:1-3.

161 If *signa* is the correct reading here (see Appendix 2: 1.1148), it implies that Bede regards the foreshadowing of Christ's birth in the quotation from Psalms that follows, not as a matter of human interpretation, but as God's intention.

times of these kings, and especially by the one which the Lord swore to the first and most eminent of the kings pleasing to himself, when he said, *Of the fruit of your womb I will set upon* my *throne*.[162] And truly this day began to decline toward evening, when presently both these same kings and the people, spurning the temple and the laws of God, were wasted and torn to pieces by their enemies. And it was followed not only by a very oppressive evening, but by night, when that whole kingdom was overthrown, the temple burned, and all the people led away captive into Babylon.

But on the fifth day *the waters brought forth the creeping creatures having life*, and *the birds* flying *over the earth under the firmament of heaven*;[163] and in the fifth age the children of the exile increased and multiplied in Babylon, which is often signified by the word 'waters'. Many of them settled there like fish in the waters, among whom nevertheless there were some who, like the great whales, **/38/** strove rather to master the waves of the age than to be subject to them, since they could not be corrupted into idolatry by any fear. Others, after their release from captivity, as though receiving the wings of liberty, returned to the land of Israel and like birds sought heavenly things with their whole effort, so that they even endeavoured to rebuild the temple and the city of God and also to restore the Law with the greatest urgency. But evening approached, when presently among other dark crimes they fell apart in civil conflicts among themselves and betrayed their own country to the Romans. And evening arrived, after it had befallen them not only to be made tributaries, but also to be subjected to the rule of a foreign king.

On the sixth day the earth produced cattle, beasts, and creeping things.[164] Also on this day God created man, the first Adam, in his own image, and he created the woman Eve from his side while he slept.[165] In the sixth age of the world, in addition to many sinners, who could rightly be compared to serpents and beasts on account of their cruelty and because they clung with their whole mind to earthly cares and allurements, there were also born many saints among the people of God, who knew how to ruminate the word of God in the likeness of clean animals chewing the cud,[166] to maintain the

162 Ps. 131:11 (132:11). Bede, perhaps influenced by Acts 2:30, alters the Vulgate *super sedem tuam* to *super sedem meam*, thereby strengthening the supposed Christological thrust of the prophecy.

163 Gen. 1:20.

164 Cf. Gen. 1:24-25.

165 Cf. Gen. 1:24-27; 2:21-22.

166 Cf. Lev. 11:3; Deut. 14:6-7. Bede famously employs this image to describe the way the illiterate cowherd Cædmon turned passages of Scripture that were read to him into English verse. See Bede, *HE* 4.24 (Colgrave and Mynors, p. 418).

hoof of discretion on the road, to bear the yoke of the good work of the divine Law, and to warm the poor from the fleece of their own sheep. There is appropriate mention of both of these types in the Gospels. Among them there appeared in the world the second Adam, that is to say, *the mediator of God and men*,[167] in whom was the whole plenitude of the image of God, and from his side, while he was sleeping on the cross, *came forth blood and water*.[168] From these sacraments is born and nourished the Church, which is the mother of all living creatures throughout the world, the true life, which is what the name *Eva* means.[169] Hence the Lord himself says about these sacraments, *He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life*.[170] Even now we see the evening of this day approaching, when, with *iniquity abound*ing everywhere*, the charity of many grow*s *cold*.[171] Its advent, **/39/** moreover, will be darker by far than the others, when, with the appearance of the man of sin, the son of iniquity, who is lifted up and raised over all because he is called God, or because he is worshipped, the tribulation will be so great that even the elect may be induced into error, if that can happen. And the hour of universal judgement will immediately follow, about which it is written, *But yet the Son of man, when he comes, will he find, do you think, faith on earth?*[172]

On the seventh day God rested from all his works, *and sanctified and blessed it*;[173] and the seventh age is an age of eternal repose in another life, in which God rests with his saints forever after the good works which he works in them through the six ages of this world. For this indeed is the age of supreme peace and repose in God, and it will be everlasting; but it began for men at the time when the body of the first martyr Abel entered into the abode of the grave, but his soul entered into the joy of eternal life. It is where the rich man saw the poor man resting, when he himself was tormented in hell.[174] And this eternal rest of the blessed souls will last until the end of the world; and when the final age of the world, after its evening of which we have already spoken comes to an end with the killing of the Antichrist by

167 1 Tim. 2:5.

168 John 19:34.

169 Augustine (*DGCM* 2.1.2 [CSEL 91, 119]) quotes Gen. 3:20 from the Old-Latin: *Et tunc Adam imposuit nomen uxori suae 'Vita', quia haec est mater omnium uiuorum* ('And then Adam gave the name of Life to his wife, because she was the mother of all the living').

170 John 6:55.

171 Matt. 24:12.

172 Luke 18:8.

173 Gen. 2:2-3.

174 Cf. Luke 16:22-23.

the Lord Jesus,[175] then also this same eternal rest will be given with greater blessing and sanctification to the bodies rising again to eternal life. And therefore, quite properly, we do not find it said that evening followed the seventh day, because this seventh age will have no gloom by which it may be terminated. On the contrary, it will be completed by the more abundant joy, as we have said, of the eighth age – of that age, namely, which, taking its beginning at that time in the glory of resurrection when all this life will pass away and enduring forever with all change at an end, will be transformed by the contemplation of the face of God.[176]

[The conclusion of the interpretation of the works of the six days]

[2:4a] These are the generations of the heaven and the earth, when they were created. With this conclusion Holy Scripture strikes at those who maintain that the world always existed without a beginning, or who believe that it was indeed made by God, but from matter which God did not make, and which was coeternal without a beginning with the Creator himself.[177] For **/40/** it says, *the generations of the heaven and the earth* – the very order of the divine creation, by which the adornment of them by the works of the six days attained the perfection that was indicated above.[178] This accords with what the Creator himself said in the Decalogue of his Law: *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all things that are in them*.[179] And this is what follows:

[2:4b-5b] In the day that the Lord God made the heaven and the earth, and every plant of the field before it sprung up in the earth, and every herb of the ground before it grew. This should not be regarded as contradicting the aforementioned statement of God, but it should clearly be understood that in this passage Scripture used the word 'day' for all that time when the primordial creation was formed. For the heaven was not made, nor illuminated by the stars, and the earth was not separated from the waters and planted with trees and green plants in any one alone of the six days. But in its usual manner Scripture used 'day' for 'time', just as the Apostle, when

175 That is, the evening of the sixth age. *In Gen.* 1.1193-1202 (above, p. 104).

176 The so-called 'first recension' of *On Genesis*, Ia, ends at this point. MSS C (*explicit exameron*), L, and V (*explicat*) contain only Ia. MSS E and S continue through almost all of the rest of book 1 (Ia + Ib), but state here: *explicit liber primus incipit liber secundus*. See Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., pp. vi–vii, and my Introduction, pp. 41–44.

177 Cf. Ambrose, *Hex.* 1.1.1 (CSEL 32, 3).

178 *In Gen.* 1.947-74 (above, p. 96).

179 Exod. 20:11.

he says, *behold, now is the day of salvation*,[180] does not mean one day in particular but all the time that we labour in this present life for eternal salvation. And the Prophet speaks not of one day in particular but of the very great time of divine grace when he says, *in that day the deaf shall hear the words of this book*.[181] Moreover, it is difficult to understand how God made in one day *the heaven and the earth, and every plant of the field, and every herb of the ground*, unless conceivably we might say that all creation was made in unformed matter at the same time, in accordance with what was written in this passage: *He that lives forever created all things together*.[182] But he certainly did this before any 'day' of this age, since *in the beginning he created heaven and earth*,[183] when, although *the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the abyss*,[184] nevertheless in the nature of that very earth and abyss, that is, the waters, hidden together as it were in its seminal substance, those things lay concealed which were soon to be produced from them separately by the work of the Creator.[185] And therefore if we say this, the aforementioned problem is brought to the same conclusion, so that we understand that the word 'day' was used in the sense of 'time' – that is to say, the time when God in the beginning created all these things together: *In the day*, it says, *that the Lord God created the earth and the heaven, and every plant of the field* **/41/** *before it sprung up in the earth, and every herb of the ground before it grew*. Because if, in the 'day' which it speaks of, we understand that time to be meant when, before any day of this age, all things were made together, the simple sense is revealed that every plant and every tree was made for a reason in the substance of the earth itself before they visibly sprang up or grew from the earth. But if we take the word 'day', which I think more suitable, as having been used in the sense of that time in which the world itself was made and adorned in six days, we understand that Scripture now wished to explain more openly how it was possible that it should have said above that *the earth brought forth the green plant and such as yields seed according to its kind and the tree that bears fruit*.[186] For in the beginning of the world the earth did not produce these things the way it now, in accordance with God's plan, generates new growth

180 2 Cor. 6:2.
181 Isa. 29:18.
182 Sirach 18:1.
183 Gen. 1:1.
184 Gen. 1:2.
185 Cf. Augustine, *Confessiones* 12.8 (PL 32, 829).
186 Gen. 1:12.

spontaneously if there is an irrigation of waters. But by means of the even more wonderful work of the Creator at that time, before any plants came into being and grew from the earth or put out shoots, the fields, mountains, and hills were suddenly covered with green plants and trees having their appropriate height, multitude of branches, shadiness of leaves, and abundance of fruits, which they received not little by little from the earth by springing forth or by germinating and springing up with an accession of growths, but by suddenly coming into being from it. And in fact this interpretation seems to be further supported by the next words, which say:

[2:5c-6] For the Lord God had not rained upon the earth, and there was not a man to work the earth. But a spring rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth. For who does not see that these things could not be said of the first creation of the earth when it was still *void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep*?[187] Did we really need to be told about rain not descending upon the earth with respect to a time when the earth itself could not receive rain nor the air give it, because the waters still filled all the regions of both? But neither could a spring rise from the earth to water it, as long as it was all covered by the deep. Hence, unless I am mistaken, **/42/** when it is said above, *in the day that the Lord God created the heaven and the earth*,[188] and so forth, it is left to be understood that by the word 'day' was meant that period of time of the first six days during which the whole creation of the world was fashioned. Therefore it is rightly stated that God did not rain upon the earth and that there was not a man to work the earth, in order that we might understand how much the first flourishing of the earth differed from the present one. For now not only does the earth blossom on its own accord by means of the watering of the rains, but many things planted in gardens and groves are produced by the industry and cultivation of men. But the first creation of green plants and trees was accomplished far otherwise. In it, under the new governance of the supreme Maker, the earth, which came into being dry, without rain and without human labour, was suddenly filled far and wide with diverse kinds of crops.

But, it says, *a spring rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth*. Before I speak of this spring and its rising up onto the earth, let me first observe that that first flowering of the earth, which the previous sentence records, occurred at God's command without any irrigation of waters. Now the watering of this spring, of whatever kind it was, happened

187 Gen. 1:2.
188 Gen. 2:4.

after the earth was clothed in green plants and trees. This is also shown by the very language of Scripture, which, after using a verb in the perfect tense to say that *the Lord God* ***created*** *the heaven and the earth and every plant of the field and every herb of the ground*,[189] at once added, using a verb in the pluperfect tense, *for the Lord God* ***had not rained*** *upon the earth, and there was not a man to work the earth*, showing that God had not sent rain before the creation of the plants and the herbs. But then, using a verb in the imperfect tense, it added what happened next, saying that *a spring* ***rose*** *out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth*, signifying by this inflection of the verb that it happened more often than once, since it does not say 'it rose once' [*ascendit*], but 'it rose repeatedly' [*ascendebat*]. Therefore, since the spring is said to have risen out of the earth, which watered all of its surface, it is proper to inquire in what manner it arose. Nothing prevents us from believing that it alternately rose up to water the surface and sank back, just as to the present day the Nile rises annually to water the flood plains of Egypt, and just as **/43/** once the Jordan watered the land of Pentapolis,[190] of which Scripture says that *all was watered … as the paradise of the Lord, and like Egypt, before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah*.[191] And just as, according to St Augustine, *concerning the wonderful variability of certain springs, it is said that they flood after a fixed interval of years so that they water the whole region, for which during the rest of the time they supply sufficient water for drinking from deep wells. Therefore, why is it incredible,* as the same authority says*, if from one source of the abyss, flowing and reflowing in alternating exchanges, the whole earth was watered at that time? And if,* he says*, Scripture desired to call the magnitude of that very abyss (not counting the part which is called the sea and surrounds the lands with obvious depth and salty waters), in that part alone which the earth contains in its hidden cavities from which all springs and rivers distribute themselves in diverse courses and fissures and burst forth severally in their own places, a 'spring', not 'springs', because of the unity of nature, and from the fact that it ascends from the earth through innumerable paths of caves and cracks, and waters the whole face of the earth as if locks of hair*

189 Gen. 2:4-5.

190 The five cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboyim, and Zoar (cf. Gen. 14:2). It is mentioned in Wisdom 10:6. According to Isidore, *Etym*. 14.3.24: *Pentapolis regio in confinio Arabiae et Palaestinae sita, dicta a quinque ciuitatibus inpiorum quae caelesti igne consumptae sunt*, 'Pentapolis, a region situated in the vicinity of Arabia and Palestine, was named for the five cities of the wicked which were consumed by fire from heaven'.

191 Gen. 13:10.

were scattered in all directions, not like the unbroken appearance of the sea or standing water, but just as we see waters coursing through the beds of rivers and the bends of streams and flooding the vicinity by their overflow – who except one who labours in a spirit of contention would not accept this? Indeed it can also be understood that the whole face of the earth was said to be watered just as the surface of the whole garment is said to have been coloured, even if it is done not continuously but in a spotted fashion; especially since at that time in the newness of the lands it is credible that many, though not all, of them were flat, where floods bursting forth could be dispersed and spread more widely.

For this reason, because of the magnitude or multitude of this spring, which either had one eruption from some source or other or, on account of some unity in the hidden cavities of the earth from which all the waters of all the springs great and small gushed forth upon the earth, it is called one spring, rising from the earth through all its divisions and watering all the face of the earth; or even, which is more credible, since it does not say, 'one spring rose from the earth', but rather, 'a spring rose from the earth', it put the singular for the plural number, so that we may understand in this way many springs, **/44/** *watering areas or particular regions throughout the whole earth, just as we speak of a 'soldier', and mean many soldiers, or just as in the plagues which struck the Egyptians, the 'locust' and the 'frog' were spoken of,*[192] *when there was a countless number of locusts and frogs. Let us not labour any further.*[193]

Therefore, since it was said that God created the plants and the herbs when the rain had not yet fallen and man did not yet exist to work the earth, the creation of man is consequently added and it is said:

[2:7] Then the Lord God formed man of the mud of the earth: and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

Here, then, is described at greater length the making of man, who was indeed made in the sixth day; but there his creation was mentioned briefly, which here is expounded more fully, namely that he was fashioned into the substance of body and soul. Of these, the body was formed *of the mud of the earth*, but the soul was created out of nothing by the inspiration of God; but also woman was fashioned from his side while he slept. Of course, in this sentence the inadequacy of the carnal sense is to be avoided, lest perchance we should think either that God formed the body of man with corporeal

192 In the Gallican Psalter, Psalm 77:45-46. In the other versions of the Psalms and in Exodus the plural number is used.

193 Augustine, *DGAL* 5.10 (CSEL 28.1, 153–54).

hands or that he breathed from throat and lips into the face of man after he had been formed, in order that man could live and have the breath of life. For likewise when the Prophet said, *Your hands have made me and formed me*,[194] he spoke this metaphorically rather than literally, that is, according to the convention which men customarily employ.[195] For God is spirit, nor is his unmixed substance believed to have been composed of the lineaments of corporeal members, except by the uneducated. *Then God formed man of the mud.* He ordered him to be made from mud by his word. *He breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul*, when he created for him the substance of the soul and spirit by which he would live. For the statement that God breathed into the face of man the breath by which he would live is thus correctly understood to mean that God created man, just as above, *God called the light day* was understood to be put for what he caused it to be called by men. Moreover, God is properly said to have breathed into man's face so that he might become a living soul, because[196] truly the spirit implanted in him contemplates those things **/45/** which are without, inasmuch as *the anterior part of the brain from which all the senses are distributed is located near the forehead*. For even *the sense of touch, which is diffused throughout the whole body, is itself said to have its path from the same anterior part of the brain – a path which is led back down again through the head and neck to the marrow of the spine*.[197] Moreover, it agrees with the statement about man that was made above: *In the image of God he created him, male and female he created them*.[198] For what is said to have been done *in the image of God* is understood to have been done only in the soul; that which was added, *male and female*, is properly understood to have been done only in the body. Therefore they are not to be listened to who think that the soul is part of God, *because if the soul of man was part of God, it could not have been deceived either by itself or by anyone else, nor could it have been forced by any necessity to do anything evil or to suffer, nor could it have been changed at all for better or worse.*

For that breath of God which gave life to man was made by him, not

194 Ps. 118:73 (119:73).

195 Cf. Bede, *DST* 2.1 (metaphor).

196 MSS E and S insert at this point: *quia nimirum sensus omnes corporis per quos insitus ei spiritus ea quae foris sunt contemplatur magis in facie uigent uisus uidelicet auditus olfatus* [*olfactus* S^2] *gustus et tactus utpote quia pars*, 'because truly all the senses of the body, namely sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, through which the spirit implanted in him contemplates those things which are without, flourish more in the face, inasmuch as the [anterior] part'.

197 Augustine, *DGAL* 7.17 (CSEL 28.1, 214).

198 Gen. 1:27.

from him, because the breath of man is not part of man, nor does man make it from himself, but out of the vapour of the air drawn in and out. But God was able to make breath from nothing, and he was able to make man living and rational, which man cannot do, although some consider that man was first brought to life not when 'God breathed into his face the breath of life, and he became a living soul',[199] *but when he received the Holy Spirit. But whichever of these may be shown to be more credible … nevertheless it is not permissible to doubt that the soul is not part of God nor created or produced from his substance and nature, but was made out of nothing.*[200]

[2:8] And the Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning, wherein he placed man whom he had formed. Certainly, we are to believe that God had planted a paradise *from the beginning*, after which he ordered the whole earth to produce **/46/** plants and fruit-bearing trees after removing the waters which covered it. Yet he placed man in it on the sixth day, on the very day he had formed him. And we cannot doubt that the paradise in which the first man was placed, although it is a type both of the present Church and of the fatherland to come,[201] must nevertheless *be understood in its proper literal sense, namely as a very pleasant place, shaded with fruitful groves, and also great and fertile with a great spring*.[202] Moreover, where our edition, which was translated from the Hebrew Truth, has the phrase *from the beginning*, the phrase *to the east* appears instead in the old translation.[203] From this some wish it to be understood that paradise is located in the eastern part of the world,[204] although it is separated from all the regions which the human race now inhabits by the interposition of a very great extent both of ocean and of lands. Hence, the waters of the Flood, which covered the whole surface of our world to a great depth, could not reach it. But whether it be there or elsewhere, God knows; yet we cannot doubt that this place was and is on earth. Furthermore, in the words that follow Scripture explains more fully how God planted it, saying,

[2:9] And the Lord God brought forth of the ground all manner of trees,

199 Gen. 2:7. Augustine is not quoting from the Vulgate.

200 Augustine, *Contra aduersarium* 1.14.21-22 (CCSL 49, 51–52).

201 Bede employs *typus* both for typology (the Church) and anagogy (the fatherland to come). This is an example of 'veiled' allegory, subject to the interpretation of human commentators like Bede. See Introduction, pp. 13–14, and Kendall, 'The Responsibility of *Auctoritas*', p. 116.

202 Augustine, *DGAL* 8.1 (CSEL 28.1, 231).

203 I.e., in the Old-Latin translation of the Septuagint, as in Augustine, *DGAL* 8.1 (CSEL 28.1, 229).

204 E.g., Isidore, *Etym*. 14.3.2.

fair to behold, and pleasant to eat of; the tree of life also in the midst of paradise, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is understood to have been done on that day when the earth at God's command also produced the other fruit-bearing trees. But it is, of necessity, repeated here so that we may be able to know what kind of place paradise is, especially because there had to be a specific mention of the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in one of which there was a sign[205] to man of the obedience which he owed to God, and in the other the sacrament of the eternal life which would be merited by that very obedience. And indeed the tree of life was so called because it received by divine agency this virtue, as I have said,[206] that he who ate from it, his body would be strengthened by enduring health, nor *would it ever* **/47/** *be altered by any infirmity or age into a worse state or slip into death*.[207] But this was done materially so that it would also be an allegorical figure of a sacrament, that is, a figure of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it was said in praise of Wisdom, *She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her*.[208] And in the Apocalypse, St John says, *To him that overcomes, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God*.[209] That is to say, in plain language, 'To him who will overcome the temptation of the old serpent, by whom Adam was overcome, I will give what I was going to give to Adam if he had overcome, so that he may be refreshed by the immediate vision of the glory of Christ forever'. And therefore he may not be touched by any assault of death, because, of course, the Lord Christ, the virtue and wisdom of God the father, is in the paradise of the heavenly kingdom, which with the other saints he deigned to promise even to the robber who confessed him on the cross.[210]

And the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Of this tree St Augustine says: *But to me considering again and again, it cannot be said how pleasing that sentence is, that the fruit of that tree was not harmful (for he who had made all things exceedingly good*[211] *had not instituted any evil in paradise), but that the transgression of God's command was the cause of evil to man. Moreover, it was necessary that man having been placed under the Lord God should have been prohibited from something, so that for him the virtue*

205 On *signum* as a technical term, see the Introduction, pp. 13–14.
206 *In Gen.* 1.919-26 (above, p. 95).
207 Augustine, *DGAL* 8.5 (CSEL 28.1, 239).
208 Prov. 3:18.
209 Rev. 2:7.
210 Cf. Luke 23:40-43.
211 Gen. 1:31.

of deserving well of his Lord would be obedience itself, which I can truly say is the only virtue for every rational creature acting under the power of God; and the first and greatest sin of arrogance which leads to destruction is to wish to enjoy his power: the name of this sin is disobedience. There is no way therefore that man might think and feel that he had a Lord, unless some command was imposed upon him. And so that tree was not evil, but it was called the tree 'of the knowledge of distinguishing good and evil', because if man should eat from it after the prohibition, in that was to be the transgression of the commandment, by which man would learn from the experience of the punishment what the difference between the good of obedience and the evil of disobedience was. Hence also, this was not said figuratively, but we must accept that there was truly a certain tree, to which the name[212] *was given, not from the produce or fruit from which it was born, but from the very thing that was to result when the fruit was tasted in violation of the prohibition*.[213] **/48/**

[2:10a] And a river went out of the place of pleasure to water paradise, *that is*, those *beautiful and fruitful trees which shaded all the earth of that region*,[214] where we must believe that it happened repeatedly in that regular succession, whereby in this earth, which we inhabit, the Nile inundates the plains of Egypt. Hence, as I also stated above,[215] this was said about the land of Sodom, which *was all watered, as the paradise of the Lord, and like Egypt*.[216] And certainly by this prudent arrangement the Lord and Creator of things wished to have some likeness in our world of that fatherland for the possession of which we were created in our first parent, in order to

212 That is, 'of the knowledge of distinguishing good and evil'.

213 Augustine, *DGAL* 8.6 (CSEL 28.1, 239–40).

214 Augustine, *DGAL* 8.7 (CSEL 28.1, 242). Augustine, commenting on Gen. 2:10, states in full: *exibat ergo flumen de Eden, id est de loco deliciarum, et inrigabat paradisum, id est ligna omnia pulchra atque fructuosa, quae omnem terram regionis illius opacabant*, 'Therefore a river went out from Eden, that is, from the place of delights, and watered paradise, that is, all the beautiful and fruitful trees which shaded all the earth of that region' (*DGAL* 8.7). Isidore (*Etym.* 14.3.2) combined these two glosses in a way which suggests how Bede may have understood his remark: *Paradisus … cuius uocabulum ex Graeco in Latinum uertitur hortus: porro Hebraice Eden dicitur, quod in nostra lingua deliciae interpretatur. Quod utrumque iunctum facit hortum deliciarum; est enim omni genere ligni et pomiferarum arborum consitus*, 'Paradise … which word is translated from Greek into Latin as "garden"; moreover in Hebrew it is called "Eden", which means "delights" in our language. The combination of the two makes the "garden of delights", for this is planted with every variety of wood and of fruit-bearing trees'.

215 *In Gen.* 1.1333-39 (above, p. 108).

216 Gen. 13:10.

urge us through a nearby example to deserve its restoration – and chiefly through that river which is known to emanate from paradise. For the Nile, which waters Egypt, is Gihon itself, which in the following verses is said to flow out from paradise. So too, by those same cities of Sodom that were destroyed,[217] which were once watered like the paradise of the Lord, God gave an example of those who are going to act with impiety, in order that we, having absolutely certain tokens of the perdition of the wicked, might the more vigilantly flee from their eternal torments.

[2:10b-11a] Which from thence is divided into four heads.[218] **The name of the one is Pishon.** It is established, as the most dependable authorities have shown, that the sources of all these rivers, which are said to go out from paradise, are known in our earth.[219] The source of Pishon, which they now call the Ganges, is certainly in the region of the Caucasus mountain.[220] The source of the Nile, which, as I have said, is called Gihon in Scripture, is not far[221] from the Atlas mountain, which is the ultimate limit of Africa toward the west. Then, the source of the Tigris and Euphrates is out of Armenia. Hence, *since the location of paradise itself is far removed from the knowledge of men, we must believe that the four parts of the waters are divided from there, but that these rivers, whose sources are said to be known, are somewhere under the earth, and that after being drawn to various places of distant regions they burst forth, where they are said,* **/49/** *as it were, to be known in their sources. For who does not know that some waters do this? But it is known there, where they no longer run under the earth.*[222] Finally,

217 Cf. Gen. 19:24-25.

218 Speiser (p. 20) explains the confusions that have crept into interpretations of the biblical text. The four rivers of Gen. 2:10-14, the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates, 'once converged, or were believed to have done so, near the head of the Persian Gulf, to create a rich garden land to which local religion and literature alike looked back as the land of the blessed. And while the Pishon and the Gihon stand for lesser streams …, the Tigris and the Euphrates leave no doubt in any case as to the assumed locale of the Garden of Eden. … In vs. 10 the term "heads" can have nothing to do with streams into which the river breaks up after it leaves Eden, but designates instead four separate branches which have merged within Eden. There is thus no basis for detouring the Gihon to Ethiopia, not to mention the search for the Pishon in various remote regions of the world'.

219 *Nostra terra*, 'our earth', seems to distinguish the known world from the whole world, which would include the site of paradise.

220 Apparently, Bede understands this to be a mountain as opposed to a mountain range.

221 Bede almost certainly wrote *non procul* instead of *nunc procul* as the MS tradition has it. Hrabanus Maurus (*Commentaria in Genesim* [PL 107, 477]), copying Bede, says *ut diximus, Geon nuncupat,* ***non procul*** *ab Atlante monte*. Cf. Pliny, *NH* 5.10.51 (*non procul*).

222 Augustine, *DGAL* 8.7 (CSEL 28.1, 242).

historians say that these same rivers, the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Nile, are absorbed in a good many places of the earth, and that they emerge again at some considerable distance further on to resume their accustomed course. We must believe that the Lord does even this as an indication of the course by which these rivers go out through more hidden cavities and longer veins of the earth from paradise to us. Moreover, *Pishon* is correctly interpreted to mean 'a change of mouth',[223] because the grace of its appearance in our earth is certainly different – that is, more ordinary by far than that displayed by the rivers in paradise.

[2:11b] That is it which compasses all the land of Havilah. This is the region of India that derives its name from the fact that it was occupied after the flood by Havilah, the son of Joktan, who was the son of the patriarch of the Hebrews Eber.[224] Josephus also reports that he occupied all the lands from the river Cephene and the region of India as far as that place which is called Hieira.[225]

[2:11c-12a] There gold grows, and the gold of that land is very good. Pliny the Elder relates that regions of India are richer in veins of gold than other lands; whence also their islands took the names Chryse and Argyre from the quantity of gold and silver.[226]

[2:12b] And there is found bdellium and the onyx stone. *Bdellium*, as the same Pliny writes, is an aromatic *tree, black* in colour, *of the size of the olive-tree*, and *with the leaf of the oak, and the fruit of the wild fig-tree, which is by its nature gum*.[227] *Its gum is clear, whitish, light, oily, evenly waxen, and that which is easily made pliable, bitter* to the taste, *of a good odour*,[228] but *when moistened more sweet-smelling than wine*.[229] The book of Numbers also mentions it, saying, *Now the manna was like coriander seed, of the colour of bdellium*,[230] that is, of a clear and whitish colour. The onyx is a precious stone; *it is so-called* **/50/** *because it has mixed in it a white lustre in the likeness of a human finger-nail. For the Greeks call the finger-nail an onyx.* And *Arabia produces this,* but *the Indian onyx has sparkles with white bands girdling it. The Arabian onyx is black with glistening white*

223 Cf. Ambrose, *De paradiso* 3.15 (CSEL 32, 274).

224 Cf. Gen. 10:25-29; 1 Chron./1 Para. 1:19-23.

225 Cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 1.6.4.

226 Cf. Pliny, *NH* 6.23.80. According to Pliny, Chryse and Argyre were islands off the mouth of the Indus River.

227 Pliny, *NH* 12.19.35.

228 Isidore, *Etym*. 17.8.6.

229 Pliny, *NH* 12.19.35.

230 Num. 11:7.

bands.[231] The old translation of the Bible has instead of these 'carbuncle' and 'prase'.[232] The carbuncle, as is shown by its name, is a stone of a fiery colour, whereby it is also reputed to light up the darkness of night. The prase is of a green appearance;[233] whence it takes its name in Greek from the leek, which among them is called a '*prason*'.

[2:13-14] And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasses all the land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Tigris: the same passes along by the Assyrians. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

With regard to the Euphrates, it does *not say* where *it flows* or what *lands it encompasses*,[234] because, since it flows in the vicinity of the Promised Land, it could readily be known by the people of Israel who were going to read these words settled in that very place. Indeed, since the return to heaven is open to us by the waters of regeneration, it suited the arrangement of divine providence well enough that we should share the very element by which we are led back to the heavenly fatherland with paradise, in which the first man was placed. And just as grace, which restores us unseen, prepares us for entry into the heavenly kingdom, so also the very water, by which it restores us, may spring forth unseen into our world from paradise through the veins of the earth. Therefore, just as *the Spirit breathes where he will, and you hear his voice, but you know not whence he comes and whither he goes*,[235] so also it was fitting that the water, which sanctifies those whom the Spirit wishes, should come from paradise by ways unknown to us and return to a place unknown to us, because the only certainty is that it originates from the paradise of pleasure.

[2:15] And the Lord God took man whom he had formed and put him into the paradise of pleasure to work it and to keep it. The phrase *to work it and to keep it* seems to look back to the passage above, where it was stated, *and there was not a man to work the earth*.[236] But by way of explanation of this statement let me give the words **/51/** of the holy father Augustine: *Why 'to work it',* he says, *and why 'to keep it'? Is it really possible that the Lord wanted the first man to work as a farmer? Or is it really credible that he had condemned him to labour before he sinned? We would certainly*

231 Isidore, *Etym.* 16.8.3.
232 As in, e.g., Augustine, *DGAL* 8.7 (CSEL 28.1, 240).
233 Cf. Isidore, *Etym.* 16.7.4. The prase is a translucent quartz the colour of leek-green.
234 Augustine, *DGCM* 2.10.14 (CSEL 91, 135).
235 John 3:8.
236 Gen. 2:5.

have thought not, unless we had seen that some people farm with so much pleasure of spirit that it is a great punishment for them to be called away from it to something else. Therefore, whatever pleasure farming has, it was certainly far greater then when no calamity had happened either on earth or in heaven. For there was no distress of labour, but a delight of the will, when those things which God had created turned out more pleasantly and fruitfully with the support of human effort. Hence the Creator himself should be praised more abundantly, who gave reason and the opportunity of working to a soul constituted in a living body, as much as would be enough for a willing mind, but not so much as would force it by the need of the body to work unwillingly.[237]

To work it, it says*, and to keep it*: that is to say*, to keep that same paradise for himself, in order not to admit anything whereby he might deserve to be expelled from there. Finally, he also receives a command in order that it may be the means by which he may keep paradise for himself, that is, by observing it he may not be cast out from there. For everyone is rightly said not to have kept his own thing, who has acted so that he lost it, even if it is saved in the hands of another, who either found it or deserved to receive it.*

There is another sense in these words which I think merits being preferred, that God 'worked' man himself and kept him. For just as man works the earth, not in the sense that he makes it earth, but that he makes it cultivated and fruitful, so God himself 'works' man, whom he himself created to be man, much more to be just, if man does not withdraw from God out of pride.[238] Therefore, God put man *in the paradise of pleasure to fashion and keep him*[239] – to work him, that is to say, so that he would be good and blessed, but *to keep him so that he would be safe,* by subjecting himself humbly to his *governance* and protection.[240]

[2:16-17a] And he commanded him, saying, Of every tree of paradise you shall eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. It is not to be believed that any evil naturally inhered in that tree, as I

237 Augustine, *DGAL* 8.8 (CSEL 28.1, 242–43).

238 Augustine, *DGAL* 8.10 (CSEL 28.1, 247).

239 This is an untranslateable, and entirely serious, play on words. Bede quotes the phrase from Gen. 2:15 exactly, but where in its original context *in paradiso uoluptatis, ut operaretur et custodiret* ***illum*** meant that God placed man 'into the paradise of pleasure to work and keep **it** [= paradise]', here, in the sense suggested by Augustine, it now means also that God placed man 'into the paradise of pleasure, to work and keep **him** [= man]'.

240 Augustine, *DGAL* 8.11 (CSEL 28.1, 248).

have said above.[241] But man *was prohibited* **/52/** *from that tree which was not evil, so that the very keeping of the command was good for him, and the transgression evil*.[242] *… Finally, when that act was committed, with respect to which the sole order of the Governor that it not be committed ought to have been heeded, nothing else was desired by the sinner except not to be under the governance of God. If this sole command were heeded, what was it other than that the will of God … be loved? What was it other than that the will of God be preferred to the human will? … Nor can it be that his own will will not fall with a great weight of destruction upon man, if he should prefer it to the divine will by exalting it. Man, scorning the command of God, found this out by experience, and from this experience learned what the difference between good and evil was, namely, the good of obedience and the evil of disobedience, that is, of pride, stubbornness, perverse imitation of God, and injurious licence. But the tree by which this could happen took its name from the thing itself, as was said above*.[243]

[2:17b] For in whatsoever day you eat of it, you shall die the death. It does not say, 'If you eat you will be mortal', but rather, *In whatsoever day you eat of it, you shall die the death*. For man died in the soul when he sinned, because God, who is the life of the soul, withdrew from him. The death of the body rightly followed the death of the soul, when the soul, which is its life, departed from it. And this death befell that first man when he came to the end of the present life a long time after he ate the forbidden fruit. It can also be understood that the day in which they sinned made that death in them, which *the Apostle bemoaned, saying, 'For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: but I see another in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'*[244] *For it was not enough for him to say, 'Who shall deliver me from this mortal body', but rather he says, 'from the body of this death'. Just as in the passage in which he says, 'the body indeed is dead because of sin',*[245] *he does not say, 'mortal', but 'dead', although to be sure it is also mortal* **/53/** *because it is going to die. Thus, we must not believe that those bodies,*[246]

241 *In Gen.* 1.1479-1500 (above, pp. 112–13 [quoting Augustine]).

242 Augustine, *DGAL* 8.13 (CSEL 18.1, 251).

243 Augustine, *DGAL* 8.13-14 (CSEL 18.1, 252). Bede quotes what 'was said above', *In Gen.* 1.1479-1500 (above, pp. 112–13).

244 Rom. 7:22-24, from Augustine.

245 Rom. 8:10, from Augustine.

246 The bodies of Adam and Eve.

though living but not yet filled with spirit, were nevertheless not mortal, that is, that which was necessary in order that they might die – which happened on the day when they touched the forbidden tree.[247]

[2:18] And the Lord God said, It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help like himself. We must believe that these words of God were not uttered by a material voice outside into the air, but that they occurred ineffably by the inner logic of the divine will by which all things were created, in accordance also with what I taught above,[248] when it was written, *Let us make man in our image and likeness*.[249] *But if* anyone *asks for what purpose this help should have been made*, let him hear the reply of St Augustine, whose words I have very frequently set down above without mentioning his name: *It probably happened,* he says, *for no other reason than for the sake of begetting children, just as the earth is a help to the seed, so that a shoot may arise from each. For it had also been said in the first arrangement of things, 'male and female he made them, and he blessed them, saying, Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and rule it'*.[250] *This arrangement and blessing of the creation and union of male and female did not cease after the sin and punishment of man, for it is on account of it that the earth is now full of men who rule it. For although they are said to have coupled and given birth after they had been driven out of paradise, nevertheless I do not see what could make it impossible that there would have been for them even in paradise 'marriage honourable and the bed undefiled',*[251] *with God's blessing, as long as they were living faithfully and justly and serving him obediently and conscientiously, so that, without any restless heat of passion, without any of the labour and pain of giving birth, offspring would have been born from their seed. This would be not so that children would take their place on the death of their parents, but so that, with those who had given birth remaining in some considerable state of beauty and taking their bodily vigour from the tree of life which had been planted there, those who were born would also be brought* **/54/** *to the same state. Then at length, on the fulfilment of a fixed number, if they all lived justly and obediently, then that change would be made, so that, without any death, their living bodies being converted into another nature in order that they might devote themselves to serving the spirit ruling them at every command and*

247 Augustine, *DGAL* 9.10 (CSEL 28.1, 278).
248 *In Gen.* 1.721-96 (above, pp. 89–91).
249 Gen. 1:26.
250 Gen. 1:27-28, from Augustine.
251 Hebr. 13:4, from Augustine.

that they might live with the quickening spirit alone without any support of bodily nourishment, they would be called spiritual beings.[252]

For if Enoch and Elijah, being dead in Adam and bearing the seed of death in the flesh, in order to pay which debt they are believed to be going to return to this life again and, what was so long delayed, to die, are now nevertheless in another life where, before the resurrection of the flesh, before the animal body is turned into a spiritual one, they lack neither sickness nor old age,[253] *how much more suitable and worthy of approval would it have been for those first humans, living without any parent or sin, to turn into some better state after the birth of their children, from which at the end of time they would be changed with all their posterity of saints into angelic form not by the death of the flesh but far more fortunately by the power of God?*[254]

[2:19a/b] And the Lord God, having formed out of the ground all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of heaven, brought them to Adam. *If anyone is disturbed because it did not say,* 'having formed out of the ground all the beasts of the earth and from the waters all the birds of heaven',[255] *but, as if he had formed both kinds from earth, instead says,* 'And the Lord God having formed out of the ground all the beasts of the earth, and all the birds of heaven', *let him observe that it is to be understood in one of two ways: either that it was silent now about that from which God had* formed *the birds of heaven, because even without its saying anything it might occur to us to perceive that the Lord did not* form *both from the earth but only* the beasts of the earth, and *that we might understand what it was from which he* formed *the birds of heaven even though Scripture is silent …; or that earth was so-called collectively together with the waters, just as it was called in that Psalm where, after the praises of the heavens were concluded, the discourse turned to earth and it was said, 'Praise the Lord from the earth, dragons, and all you deeps',*[256] *etc., and it was not afterwards said, 'Praise the Lord from the waters'. For there, where all the deeps are which nevertheless praise the Lord 'from the earth', are also the creeping things and* **/55/** *the feathered birds which notwithstanding praise* God *'from the earth',*

252 Augustine, *DGAL* 9.3 (CSEL 28.1, 271–72).

253 These assumptions about Enoch and Elijah are based on Gen. 5.22, Malach. 4:5, and Rev. 11:3-12.

254 Augustine, *DGAL* 9.6 (CSEL 28.1, 274–75).

255 Cf. Gen. 1:20. Here and below, Bede substitutes the wording of the Vulgate for Augustine's Old-Latin version.

256 Ps. 148:7.

according to that collective appellation of 'earth', according to which it is also said of the whole world, 'God who made heaven and earth'[257] *– whatever was created from earth is truly understood to have been created either from dry land or from the waters*.[258]

[2:19b] He brought them, it says, **to Adam to see what he would call them**. It must not be thought in a carnal sense that God brought the beasts of the earth or the birds to Adam in the same way as a shepherd is accustomed to drive his flock from place to place. Instead, it should be understood that, just as he created these creatures from the waters by divine power when he willed, so also, when he willed, he brought them to man by the hidden command of his power to be examined, even as we read that winged creatures and quadrupeds of every kind came to Noah's ark, not gathered together by the hand of the man but divinely driven, and entered it, not knowing indeed why they had come, but with the knowledge of the man, who took them as they came, under the guidance and command of God, into the ark.

[2:19c-20b] For whatsoever Adam called any living creature the same is its name. And Adam called all the living creatures of the earth by their names, and all the birds of heaven, and all the beasts of the earth. Notice that Adam named the animals of the earth and the birds of heaven in that language which the whole human race spoke up to the building of the tower at which time languages were divided.[259] But in casting down the tower, when God assigned to each people its own separate language, he must also be supposed at that time to have specified for them the names of the animals as also of other things, for each according to their own language – although it is also no secret that men afterwards throughout the different peoples gave names at their own pleasure to many things, both to innovations that by chance occurred and to living things, and even now are accustomed to do so. Finally, Scripture records nothing about fish having been brought to Adam for him to name them; but it is probable that as they became known little by little a variety of names in accordance with the variety of peoples were bestowed upon them. It seems that the first language **/56/** of the human race was Hebrew, for which reason it is well known that all the names which we read in Genesis up to the division of languages are from that language. The reason for bringing all the animals of the earth and the birds of heaven to Adam for God to see what he would call them and what names he would give them is this, that in this way *God might demonstrate to man how much*

257 Cf. Gen. 2:4.

258 Augustine, *DGAL* 9.1 (CSEL 28.1, 269).

259 Cf. Gen. 11:1-9: the 'tower' is the tower of Babel.

better he was than all the animals lacking reason. … For from this it is clear that man by virtue of that reason is better than the beasts, because only reason, which is better, *can distinguish and set them apart by name*.[260]

[2:20c-22a] But for Adam there was not found a helper like himself. Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam. And when he was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs and filled up flesh for it. And the Lord God built the rib which he took from Adam into a woman. In regard to the fact that the woman was made from the side of the man, we can suppose that it was proper for it to be done in this way for the sake of commending the strength of that union. But the fact that it happened to the man while he was sleeping, that after the bone was removed flesh was filled up in its place, was done for the sake of a deeper mystery. For it was signified that the sacraments of salvation were to come out from the side of Christ on the cross by the death of the sleeping one, namely the blood and water, from which his bride, the Church, would be founded. For if so great a sacrament were not to be prefigured in the creation of the woman, what need was there for Adam to have slept, so that God might take his rib from which to make the woman, who could do the same thing to him while he was both awake and not suffering? Why was it necessary that, when the bone that was taken from the side of the man was made into the woman, in place of the bone not bone but flesh was filled up, unless it was being prefigured that Christ would become weak for the sake of the Church, but that by him the Church would truly become strong? Hence, for the sake of the same mystery Scripture also used a figurative word, in that it did not say 'made', or 'formed', or 'created', as in all the works above, but instead it says, *the Lord God* ***built*** *the rib which he took from Adam into a woman*, not as if it were a human body, but **/57/** as if it were a house, 'which house we are if we hold fast the confidence and glory of hope unto the end'.[261] For it was fitting that the beginning of the human race, through the work of God, should proceed in such a way, since in prophetic figures it gave testimony of its redemption, which was going to come at the end of time by means of the same Creator.

[2:22b-23b] And he brought her to Adam. And Adam said, This now is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. Since, when all the animals of the earth and the birds had been brought to him, Adam had not found any

260 Augustine, *DGCM* 2.11.16 (CSEL 91, 137). As Jones ('Bede's Commentary on Genesis', p. 118) observes, 'Bede copied Augustine in asserting that language is man's unique gift, which gives him the power to control nature rationally'.

261 Hebr. 3:6.

among them like himself, now, when he saw a help made like himself[262] and brought to him, he rightly approved, and he cried out and said, *This now is bone of my bones*. *Now*, that is to say, because among the other animals he had seen before he had not seen one like himself, and *bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh*, because the other animals which he had seen having bone and flesh and which he had distinguished by name, he knew had been made not from his own substance, but out of earth and waters. And just as he had given names to those that had been brought to him, so it remained to bestow a name on the one whom he knew had been created like himself and from his own body.

[2:23c] She, it says, **shall be called woman** [*uirago*]**, because she was taken out of man** [*uiro*]. Just as the Latin etymology is appropriate in these words, since *uirago* is taken from *uir*,[263] so too is the Hebrew, for in that language 'man' is called *his*, and, deriving its name from this, 'woman' is called *hissa*.[264] And that 'man' is called *his* in Hebrew is also proved by the word 'Israel', which means 'man seeing the Lord'.[265] But it is also particularly suited to the sacraments of Christ and the Church that Adam wanted the woman who was created from his own flesh to become a partner in his name, because our Lord Jesus Christ also gave a share in his name to the Church, which he redeemed at the price of his own body and blood and chose as a bride for himself, so that it was called 'Christian' from Christ, and from Jesus, that is, the Savior, it looked for eternal salvation. Nor should it be overlooked that the sleep, or, as the old translation has it, *the* ***ecstasis***, that is, '*aberration of the mind*',[266] *which God sent into Adam*,[267] is *rightly understood*, as St Augustine says, *as having been sent for this reason,* **/58/** *so that his mind through* ***ecstasis*** *should become a participant, as it were, in the angelic court, and entering into the sanctuary of God should understand his last end.*[268] *Finally, awakening, as it were, full of prophecy, when he saw his wife brought to him, he uttered immediately what the Apostle designated as 'a great sacrament',*[269] *'This now is bone of my bones and flesh of my*

262 Cf. Gen. 2:18.

263 This etymology is correct.

264 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 2.23 (CCSL 72, 5). Speiser (p. 18) observes that the close assonance of the two Hebrew words has no etymological basis.

265 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Exod. (CCSL 72, 75).

266 This gloss of *ecstasis* is a commonplace, as, e.g., in Augustine, *Enarrationes* 34.2.6 (PL 36, 337); cf. Bede, *In Habacuc* 526-27 (CCSL 119B, 400).

267 Gen. 2:21, from Augustine.

268 Cf. Ps. 72:17 (73:17).

269 Eph. 5:32.

flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man',[270] and what follows:

[2:24] Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. *While Scripture itself is witness what the words of the first man were, the Lord nevertheless in the Gospel declared that God spoke them. For he says, '"Have you not read, that he who made man from the beginning, made them male and female?" And he said, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh"',*[271] *in order that we might understand from this that Adam was able to say this like a prophet by divine inspiration on account of the* ***ecstasis*** *which had gone into him before*.[272]

If therefore Christ cleaved to the Church so that they were two in one flesh, how did he leave his Father and his mother? He left his Father, because *when he was in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant*.[273] That is, 'he left his Father', not because he forsook and retreated from his Father, but because he did not appear to men in that form in which he is equal to the Father. How did he leave his mother? By leaving the Synagogue of the Jews, in which he was born according to the flesh, and by cleaving to the Church, which he gathered together from all the nations, so that they would be two in one flesh by the blessing of the New Covenant; because although he is God in the presence of the Father by whom we were made, he was made our partner through the flesh, so that we can be the body of his head.[274]

[2:25] And each of them was naked, to wit, Adam and his wife, and they were not ashamed.[275] And rightly, *for why should there have been*

270 Augustine, *DGAL* 9.19 (CSEL 28.1, 294).

271 Matt. 19:4-5.

272 Augustine, *DGAL* 9.19 (CSEL 28.1, 294). This whole discussion revolves around a double ambiguity. First, there is the question of who speaks Genesis 2:24 ('Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh'), Adam or Scripture (God)? Second, who speaks or writes the words 'And he said' in Matthew 19:4, Christ or Matthew? Augustine and Bede assume that Adam speaks the words in Gen. 2:24, and that Christ speaks the phrase 'and he said', in Matt. 19:4, in which case God does the speaking, and what he says is Gen. 2:24. Thus, Augustine resolves the apparent contradiction by enabling Adam to learn the words of God in a divine trance and to speak them. Modern scholarship eliminates the first ambiguity by assigning to Adam only his reported speech in Gen. 2:23 (see Alter, pp. 22–23).

273 Philipp. 2:6-7.

274 Cf. Eph. 1:22-23.

275 It is from this point to the end of book 1 that, according to Jones (Introduction to Bede,

shame when they had felt no law 'in their members fighting against the law of their mind'?[276] *The punishment of sin pursued them after the performance* **/59/** *of the transgression, with disobedience doing what had been prohibited and justice punishing what had been done. Before this happened, they were naked, as it is said, and they were not embarrassed. There was no motion*[277] *in the body for which modesty was owed; they did not think anything needed to be veiled, because they had perceived nothing that ought to be restrained.*[278]

[3:1a] Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God had made. *This serpent can be said to be* 'more subtle than any of the beasts' *not by reason of its own irrational mind, but from a spirit up to then foreign to it, that is, a diabolic spirit. For however far the apostate angels have been cast down from their heavenly seats in punishment for their own perversity and pride, nevertheless by nature they are more excellent than all* the animals of the earth *on account of the superiority of their reason. Therefore what wonder if the devil on his own impulse, filling the serpent at that moment, and mingling his own spirit in him, in the way in which the soothsayers of the demons are accustomed to be filled, had rendered him* the most subtle *of all* the animals of the earth, or, as another edition has it,[279] *the wisest of the beasts in accordance with the living and irrational mind of living creatures*.[280]

Therefore if it is asked why God permitted man to be tempted, whom he foreknew would yield to the tempter, the true reason presents itself[281] *that man would not have been worthy of great praise, if he were able to live well because no one persuaded him to live badly, since he had it both in his nature to be able, and in his power to will, not to consent to the tempter, with the assistance however of the one who 'resists the proud and gives grace to the humble'*.[282]…

And it must be realized that this tempter would not have cast man down

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In Gen., p. viii), 'Bede seems in a panic of haste'. I do not agree with his assessment. See Introduction, pp. 41–42.

276 Cf. Rom. 7:23.

277 I.e., the physical arousal of sexual desire.

278 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.1 (CSEL 28.1, 335).

279 The Old-Latin translation of the Septuagint with which Augustine was working.

280 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.2 (CSEL 28.1, 336).

281 Whereas Augustine represents this question as being so deep as to be almost beyond his power to answer and hedges the answer that follows with cautions, Bede confidently presents Augustine's answer as the 'true reason'.

282 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.4 (CSEL 28.1, 337); James 4:6, from Augustine.

unless a certain pride which should have been suppressed had preceded in man's soul, so that he might learn by the humiliation of sin, how much he wrongly presumed of himself.[283] *Indeed, it is very truly said, 'The heart is exalted before destruction, and it is humbled before glory'*[284] *… And likewise some are puzzled about this temptation of the first man, that God permitted it to be done, as if they do not see that the whole human race is now tempted by the snares of the devil without cease.* **/60/** *And why does God permit this? Probably because virtue is tested and disciplined and it is a more glorious victory not to have yielded after having been tempted than to have been unable to be tempted.*[285]

But if it is asked why the devil was permitted to tempt by the serpent in particular, this was done at that time for the sake of giving a sign … Not that the devil wanted to give a sign for our instruction, but as he could not approach to tempt, unless he was permitted to do so, could he have approached by any way other than what was permitted? Therefore, whatever that serpent signified must be attributed to that providence, under which even the devil himself has indeed his desire of doing evil, but not the opportunity, except what is given to him, either to subvert and destroy 'the vessels of wrath' or to humble or test 'the vessels of pity'.[286]

And therefore the serpent did not understand the sounds of the words which were made by him to the woman. For it is not to be believed that his mind was converted into a rational nature, when not even men themselves, whose nature is rational, know what they are saying when a demon speaks in them with that malady for which an exorcist is required. How much less would he have understood the sounds of the words which the devil made in that way through him and by him – he who would not have understood the man speaking, if he heard him without the diabolic malady?[287]

[3:1b-3] Therefore he said to the woman, Why has God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise? And the woman answered him, saying, Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise we do eat. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God has commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die. *The serpent first asked and the woman gave this*

283 Cf. Judith 6:15.

284 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.5 (CSEL 28.1, 338); apparently Augustine's blend of Prov. 16:18; 18:12; 29:23.

285 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.6 (CSEL 28.1, 339).

286 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.12 (CSEL 28.1, 344–45); Rom. 9:22-23, from Augustine.

287 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.28 (CSEL 28.1, 360–61).

answer, so that the transgression was inexcusable, and in no way could it be said that the woman had forgotten what God had commanded.[288]

[3:4-5] And the serpent said to the woman, No, you shall not die the death. For God does know that in whatever day you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. *What can it mean* **/61/** *here, except that he was convinced that they did not want to be under God, but rather in their own power without God, so that they might not observe his law, as if he were jealous of them lest they rule themselves – they not desiring his* eternal *light, but* lacking *their own foresight to distinguish as it were with their own eyes good and evil, which he had prohibited?*[289] In these words it should be noted with what villainous cunning the devil tempted man from the beginning. Not only did he teach him disobedience and contempt for his Creator as though his Creator were jealous of him, but he also proposes that he should believe in a multitude of gods, saying, 'and you shall be as gods', since, although he could not perhaps compel him to disobedience, he would nevertheless corrupt the purity of the faith by which they worshipped one God; but if he should compel, he would prove to be victorious over both. But *how would the woman have believed from these words that they had been divinely prohibited from a good and useful thing, unless now the love of her own power was present in her mind, and a certain proud opinion of herself, which ought to have been overcome and humbled by that temptation? And finally not being satisfied with the words of the serpent, she regarded the tree carefully, and*

[3:6a/b] She **saw**, as Scripture says, **that it was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold**,[290] *and hence, not believing that she could die, I think that she thought that God had said, 'If you eat, you will die the death',*[291] *for the sake of some sign or other. And therefore,*

[3:6c] She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband, *perhaps even with a seductive word, which Scripture passing over in silence left to be understood. Or perhaps there was no need at that time for her husband to be persuaded since he saw that she had not died from that food*.[292]

[3:6d-7a] Who did eat, and the eyes of them both were opened. *Opened to what, except to mutual desire, and to the punishment of sin received by the*

288 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.30 (CSEL 28.1, 362–63).

289 Augustine, *DGCM* 2.15.22 (CSEL 91, 143).

290 In this extended quotation from Augustine, Bede changes citations of the Old-Latin version to the Vulgate text.

291 Cf. Gen. 2:17.

292 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.30 (CSEL 28.1, 363–64).

death of the flesh itself, so that now it was not only a living body, which was able, if they had maintained their obedience, to be changed into a better and spiritual condition without death, but from this time forth a body of death in which 'the law in the members fought against the law of the mind'.[293] *For* **/62/** *they had not been made with their eyes closed, and they were not wandering about in the paradise of delights, blind and feeling their way by touch …* It is like that passage of the Gospel*, when it said of those two, one of whom was Cleopas, that when the Lord had broken bread with them, 'their eyes were opened and they knew him',*[294] *whom they had not known on the road; certainly they were not walking with their eyes closed, but they were unable to recognize him … Therefore the eyes* of the first humans *were opened to this which they were not open to before, although they were open to other things*.[295]

[3:7b/c] And when they perceived themselves to be naked, they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves aprons. *The rational soul blushed for the bestial motion in the members of its own flesh, and struck shame into it, not only because it felt this in that place where it had never before felt any such thing, but also because that shameful motion came from the transgression of the command. For it felt this there, where before it was clothed in grace, since in its nudity it experienced nothing unseemly … And then in that confusion they ran together to the leaves of the fig-tree,* which perhaps in their confusion they came upon first. *They sewed* 'perizomata', that is, *aprons, and because they forsook what ought to be glorified, they covered their genitals. Nor do I think that they supposed that there was something in those leaves that made it suitable for their now wanton members to be covered with the like; but with an obscure urge they were compelled to it by that confusion, so that even so important a sign of their punishment would be made by them in ignorance, which having been made would convict the sinner and having been written would teach the reader*.[296]

Moreover, the blessed Ambrose briefly but clearly explained the mystical meaning of this tree beneath which the Lord also saw Nathanael placed,[297] saying, *Blessed are they who tie their horses under the vine*[298] *and the olive-tree, devoting the course of their labours* to the appearance of *joy. The*

293 Cf. Rom. 7:23.
294 Luke 24:31; cf. Luke 24:13-31.
295 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.31 (CSEL 28.1, 364–65).
296 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.32 (CSEL 28.1, 366).
297 Cf. John 1:48.
298 Cf. Gen. 49:11.

fig-tree – low in height, easily broken when worked, weak in use, barren of fruit – that is, the enticing itch of the delights of the world, still overshadows me.[299] And in another place he says, *What is more serious, therefore, is that Adam girded himself with this interpretation there in that very place where he ought to have girded himself rather* **/63/** *with the fruit of chastity; for in the loins with which we are girded certain seeds of generation are said to be, and therefore Adam wickedly girded himself there with useless leaves, where it would signify that it was not going to be the fruit of future generation, but certain sins*.[300]

[3:8a/b] And when he heard the voice of the Lord God walking in paradise in the breeze after noon, Adam and his wife hid themselves. *It had already become appropriate that those who had deserted from the light of truth be visited* after noon.[301] Hence, fittingly, the Lord ascended the cross at noon, and having promised a room in paradise to the thief, after noon, that is, at the ninth hour, he gave up the spirit; so that clearly at the same hour that the first man had touched the tree of transgression, the second man would ascend the tree of redemption, and at that same hour of the day he expelled the sinners from paradise, he would lead the witness of the faith[302] into paradise.

[3:8b] Adam and his wife hid themselves, it says, **from the face of the Lord God amidst the trees of paradise**. *When God inwardly turns away*

299 Ambrose, *De uirginibus* 1.1.3 (PL 16, 189).

300 Augustine, *Contra Iulianum* 2.6.16 (PL 44, 685), from Ambrose, *De paradiso* 13.67 (CSEL 32, 325). By taking this sentence out of its context and omitting its final clause, Augustine, followed by Bede, somewhat obscures Ambrose's meaning. In chapter 13 of *De paradiso*, Ambrose sets up a double interpretation of the fig-tree – *in bono et in malo* – , depending on whether one chooses the fruit or the leaves. In the 'good' interpretation, based on Micah 4:4 and Prov. 27:18, the spiritual fig-tree, under which the righteous and the saints rest, is abundant in fruit. In the 'bad' interpretation, it cannot bear fruit or keep its verdure. Adam girds himself with the bad interpretation, choosing the leaves rather than the fruit. This signified sins, 'which lasted until the advent of the Lord Saviour'. For interpretation *in bono et in malo*, see Introduction, p. 18.

The larger issue that Bede is wrestling with in his discussion of Gen. 3:1-7 (*In Gen.* 1.1874-2001) has to do with the 'signification' of events that can only be interpreted retrospectively and with the aid of other events. The serpent does not know the meaning of the words he speaks to Eve, and Eve falsely understands the consequences of her act. Adam does not understand the meaning of choosing fig leaves to cover himself. But these events acquire layers of meaning when examined over time by commentators such as Ambrose, Augustine, and Bede.

301 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.33 (CSEL 28.1, 367).

302 I.e., the thief.

his face … let us not wonder that these things that are like madness are done from excessive shame and fear; nor also is that obscure urge quiet, so that they do those things in ignorance that mean something, and which posterity, on account of whom these things are written, will understand at some time or other.[303] For those who sin hide themselves from the face of God, because they render themselves unworthy of the sight of divine goodness. They hide themselves from the face of God, not in such a way that the inward Judge[304] does not see their conscience, but that they may never see the glory of his face except by repentance.

[3:9] And the Lord God called Adam and said to him, Where are you? He certainly did not ask out of ignorance, but through rebuke he warned that he in whom God was not should attend to where he was. For now that he had eaten of the forbidden tree, he had died the death of the soul, since his life is said to have deserted it. *And this certainly has some significance, that just as the command was given to the man through whom it would come to the woman, so the man is questioned first. For the command came from the Lord through the man to the woman, but sin came from the devil through the woman to the man. These are filled with mystical meanings, not by the agency of those in whom* **/64/** *these things were done, but by the most potent wisdom of God doing it about them. But I am not now revealing what was signified, but defending what was done*.[305]

[3:10] And he said, I heard your voice in paradise, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself. *It is quite probable that by means of a creation suited to such action God was accustomed to appear in human form to those first humans, whom he nevertheless never permitted to perceive their nudity, lifting up their attention to heavenly things, were it not that after sinning they had felt a shameful motion in their members according to the penal law of the members. Therefore they were affected, as men are accustomed to be affected under the eyes of men; and such was the affect of the punishment of sin that they wished to hide that which nothing can hide … Because it now caused them to be filled with shame towards themselves,*

303 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.33 (CSEL 28.1, 367–68).

304 The phrase *internus arbiter* is found in Gregory (e.g., *Moralia* 7.10.10 [CCSL 143, 341]). It is a favourite with Bede: *In Gen.* 2.167 (below, p. 00), etc., *In Ezram* 2.1476 (CCSL 119A, p. 324), *HE* 3.15 (Colgrave and Mynors, p. 260), etc.; similarly, *internus iudex*, *In Gen.* 3.454 (below, p. 00). It has the force of 'God, the judge of the secrets of the soul'. Cf. Augustine, *DGAL* 11.42 (CSEL 28.1, 378): *Deum internorum scrutatorem*, 'God the examiner of the secrets of the soul'.

305 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.34 (CSEL 28.1, 368).

for which reason they had also made aprons for themselves, even thus girded they feared more deeply by far to be seen by him, who brought with a friendly disposition, so to speak, human eyes for the sake of seeing them as it were by a creature capable of sight.[306]

Therefore the Lord, wishing now to punish the sinners, who had been questioned according to the rule of justice, with a greater punishment than the one concerning which they were already compelled to blush, says,

[3:11] And who has told you that you were naked, but that you have eaten of the tree whereof I commanded you that you should not eat? *Hence death, which was acquired by the sentence of God, who had threatened as much, made the members to be perceived lustfully. When their eyes were said to be opened,*[307] *it followed that there was shame*.[308]

[3:12] And Adam said, The woman, whom you gave me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat. *Pride! Did he say, I have sinned? He has the disgrace of embarrassment, and he lacks the humility of confession. These things were written because these questions were of course also asked in order that they might be written for our advantage, so that we may notice how men suffer from pride today, only trying to hold the Creator responsible if they do any evil, although they wish to take the credit if they do any good. 'The woman', he says, 'whom you gave me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat',*[309] *as if she were given because she would rather not obey her husband, and both would rather not obey God*.[310] **/65/**

[3:13] And the Lord God said to the woman, Why have you done this? And she answered, The serpent deceived me, and I did eat. *And she – opposite in sex, but equal in pride – does not confess her sin, but blames it on another … 'The serpent', she says, 'deceived me, and I did eat',*[311] *as if anyone's urging ought to be preferred to the command of God*.[312] And she also blames the cause of the sin on the Creator, who created the serpent in paradise, by whom she was deceived.

[3:14a/b] And the Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this thing, you are cursed among all animals and beasts of the earth.

306 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.34 (CSEL 28.1, 368–69).
307 Cf. Gen. 3:7.
308 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.35 (CSEL 28.1, 369).
309 Bede repeats the Vulgate wording, in place of Augustine's Old-Latin version.
310 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.35 (CSEL 28.1, 369–70).
311 Again, Bede substitutes the Vulgate wording.
312 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.35 (CSEL 28.1, 370).

Because *the serpent is not asked why he did this, it can be seen that he had certainly not done it of his own nature and will, but that the devil, who had already been destined to the fire on account of the sin of disobedience and pride, had worked with him and through him. Now therefore what is said to the serpent, and which certainly is applied to the one who worked through the serpent, without doubt was said figuratively. For in these words the tempter is described as he would be to the human race*.[313]

[3:14c/d] Upon your breast shall you go, and earth shall you eat all the days of your life. Indeed, the serpent goes upon his breast, because all the courses of the devil are villainies and deceits; for 'on his breast' indicates his craft and the stratagems of his thoughts, with which *he creeps to those whom he wishes to deceive*, for which the old translation has, *you will creep on your breast and belly*.[314] But he creeps on his breast when he suggests earthly thoughts to men, whom he desires to make his members.[315] And he creeps on his belly when he arouses them, overcome by gluttony, to the heat of passion. For all things that creep drag their body along the ground. Moreover, all reprobates are the body of the devil, and he creeps on his breast and belly, when he presses them down to hell with perverse thoughts and the enticements of riotous feasting.[316] And he devours the earth when he feeds upon and takes delight in the error of sinners and, leading them astray, snatches them to destruction. For just as the saints are often indicated by the name of 'heaven', so those *who mind earthly things*[317] are indicated by the name of 'earth', as in a subsequent verse it is said to Adam, *You are earth, and you will go to earth*, which our translation gives as, **/66/** *for dust you are, and into dust you shall return*.[318] As a sign of this spiritual devouring, even the irrational serpent itself, whom the devil used as his mouth-piece to deceive man, is now commanded to eat the physical earth, who previously

313 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.36 (CSEL 28.1, 371).

314 Augustine, *DGCM* 2.17.26 (CSEL 91, 148). Here is a good illustration of the extremes of variation in the Old-Latin versions of the Bible. Where the Vulgate, which Bede follows, reads *super pectus tuum gradieris*, Augustine here reads *pectore et uentre repes*, but in *DGAL* 11.36 (CSEL 28.1, 370), he gives it as *super pectus tuum et uentrem tuum ambulabis*, whereas Ambrose (*De paradiso* 15.74 [CSEL 32, 331]) has *supra pectus tuum et in utero tuo ambulabis*. See Introduction, p. 56.

315 In view of the extensive use in the discussion above of *membra* as a euphemism for the genitals, it seems best to continue to render it as 'members' (rather than 'limbs') to capture the sexual innuendo here.

316 Cf. Rom. 13:13.

317 Philipp. 3:19.

318 Gen. 3:19. Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes* 103.4.11 (PL 37, 1386).

had been allowed to feed together with the other animals on the plants of the earth and the fruit of the trees.

[3:15a/b] I will put enmities between you and the woman, and your seed and her seed. The seed of the woman is the whole human race;[319] the seed of the devil are the apostate angels, who were corrupted by the example of his pride and rebellion. His seed is *perverse suggestion; the seed of the woman is the fruit of good work, by which perverse suggestion is resisted*.[320] And it is known to all the faithful more clearly than the sun how much the human race endures the enmity of this serpent and his infamous seed, and how much enmity all the elect exercise against him by living rightly. The sign of this enmity even appears in the nature of the irrational serpent, whereby he is always the general enemy of all the animals and beasts of the earth on account of the bane of poison that has been implanted in him. Certainly we are to believe that it was implanted in him at the time of the curse, and not before.

[3:15c/d] She shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for her heel. The woman crushes the head of the serpent when holy Church drives away the snares of the devil and the poisonous urges detected immediately in the very beginning, and trampling them under foot, as it were, reduces them to nothing. She crushes the head of the serpent, when, governed by the powerfully humbling hand of God, she frequently resists pride, by which Eve was deceived, *for pride is the beginning of all sin*.[321] And the serpent lies in wait for the heel of the woman, because the devil, going *about* the Church, *as a roaring lion,* seeks *whom he may devour*,[322] just as the steps of our good work may destroy him.[323] He lies in wait for the heel, when at the end of our present life he bustles about to seize us. For the end of our life is rightly signified by the 'heel', which is the end of the body, because that condition of the serpent, who is crushed by all who can, and himself does not cease to lie in wait to strike at the feet of men, also figuratively signifies both.[324] **/67/**

319 Christian commentators from the time of the early church have regarded this verse, with its reference to the 'seed' of Eve, as the 'Protevangelium', the first utterance of the advent of Christ, but von Rad (*Genesis*, p. 93) asserts that this 'does not agree with the sense of the passage', and Bede does not interpret it this way. For Bede's 'restraint' in his comment on this verse (in not, as he 'rarely does', 'refer[ring] an Old Testament figure' to Mary), see Carroll, *The Venerable Bede*, p. 190, and n. 58.

320 Augustine, *DGCM* 2.18.28 (CSEL 91, 150).

321 Sirach 10:15.

322 1 Peter 5:8.

323 Cf. Hebr. 12:13.

324 That is, the primarily tropological, or moral, interpretations of (1) the woman crushing the head of the serpent, and (2) the serpent lying in wait for the heel of the woman.

[3:16a/c] To the woman also he said, I will multiply your sorrows and your conceptions; in sorrow shall you bring forth your children. *These words of God concerning the woman are also much more appropriately understood figuratively and prophetically. Nevertheless, because the woman had not yet given birth, and the pain and sorrow of childbirth arises from the body of death,*[325] *which was received from the transgression of the command … this punishment is announced in its literal sense;* for in the following:
[3:16c] And you shall be under your husband's power, and he shall have dominion over you,[326] since *it* would *be wrong to believe that the woman was created before sin otherwise than under the dominion of her husband,* and that she lived otherwise than under his power, *it can rightly be accepted that this servitude, which is in the nature of a condition rather than of love, was signified, so that even such servitude as that whereby men afterwards began to be slaves to men is found to have arisen from the punishment of sin. Indeed, the Apostle said, 'by charity of the spirit serve one another';*[327] *but never did he say, 'rule over one another'. And so married couples can 'serve one another by charity of the spirit'; but the Apostle does not allow the woman to rule over the man.*[328] *For by his ruling he handed over this power instead to the husband, and he deserved to have matrimonial rule over the wife, not by nature but by fault, because unless she be ruled, she will be corrupted further and her fault will be increased.*[329]

Figuratively, these words are appropriate to the Church, that is, the bride of Christ, whose afflictions are multiplied in this life after the sin of the first transgression, so that having been chastised she may attain to life everlasting. And her conceivings are multiplied, when she busies herself giving birth to spiritual offspring to God by preaching and living rightly. Whence she says to these same offspring of hers in the words of the outstanding preacher, *My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you.*[330] She bears her children in sorrow, when she anxiously fears that just as the serpent led Eve astray by his cunning, so their senses may be corrupted, and they may fall away from the innocence which is in Christ. She acts under the power of the husband, because she serves the Lord in fear and rejoices in him not with composure but with trembling, to whom, if she had never

325 For the notion of the 'body of death', see *In Gen.* 1.1964-65 (above, p. 128).
326 Bede substitutes the Vulgate reading for Augustine's Old-Latin text.
327 Gal. 5:13.
328 Cf. 1 Tim. 2:12.
329 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.37 (CSEL 28.1, 372).
330 Gal. 4:19.

sinned, she would have been united solely by the embrace of a carefree love. And he will rule over her, restraining her carnal motions, and moving her forward to the comprehension **/68/** of heavenly life by the constant practice of divine education, from which if she had never withdrawn, she would always have reigned jointly with him in freedom.

[3:17-18] And to Adam he said, Because you have hearkened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded you that you should not eat, cursed is the earth in your work. With labour and toil shall you eat it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, and you shall eat the plants of the earth, and so forth. *Who does not know that these labours of the human race are on earth, and that they would not have existed, if the felicity of paradise had been kept?*[331] For by the sin of man the earth was cursed, so that it gave birth to thorns, not in order that the earth itself, which is without sense, would feel the punishments, but so that it should put the crime of human sin always before men's eyes, whereby they should from time to time be reminded to turn away from sins and toward the commands of God. For poisonous plants were created for the punishment and for the torment of mortals. And it should be noted in regard to sin that we became mortals after sin. Men are mocked by barren trees, so that they may understand how shameful it is to be without the fruit of good works in the field of God, that is, in the Church, and so that they may fear that God may forsake them, because they neglect the barren trees in their fields and do not apply any cultivation to them. Therefore, before the sin of man it is not written that the earth brought forth anything except crops of food and fruitful trees; but after sin we see that many wild and barren things spring up, for the reason that I have spoken of. But the earth, which mystically is said to have been cursed in Adam's deed of transgression, is not in a different sense taken to be better than flesh. For it now puts forth thorns and thistles in us, because, having been propagated by carnal desire, we suffer the prickings and enticements of the vices from the flesh itself.

[3:19] In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread till you return to the earth out of which you were taken, for dust you are and into dust you shall return. Here, you must understand him to be the bread, who said, *I am the bread of life … which came down from heaven*.[332] We eat in the sweat of our faces, because we do not ascend to the sight of the divine Highness, except through the labour of needful suffering. **/69/**

331 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.38 (CSEL 28.1, 373).

332 John 6:48; 6:51.

[3:20] And Adam called the name of his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. It is an acknowledged fact that Adam bestowed this name on his wife by divine inspiration, because it was so suitably appropriate to the holy Church, in whose unity alone, which is called 'catholic', the gate of life lies open to all.[333]

[3:21] And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them. *This was done for the sake of its allegorical meaning, but nevertheless it was done*.[334] For by a garment of this kind the Lord teaches that they had now been made mortal. Skins, of course, which are not removed except from dead animals, contain the allegorical figure of death. Thus, *when, against the command, man desires to be God not by lawful imitation, but by unlawful pride, he is cast down to the mortal nature of wild beasts*.[335] And indeed they had made for themselves aprons of the leaves of the fig-tree, with which to cover their genitals; but God makes them garments of skins, with which he clothes their whole body. Because, having lost the glory of innocence by their transgression, they claimed for themselves the garment of an excuse, by which to transfer their fault to the Creator; and the Creator himself punished them with a sentence of a just judgement when he deprived them of the condition of eternal life by the penalty of mortality both in the soul and in the flesh. But the parable of the Gospel[336] relates that among other gifts the devoted father ordered even *the first robe* to be brought forth for his dissolute son who was returning to him penitently and that he be clothed, mystically teaching that the elect are to receive in Christ at the end of time the garment of immortality, which they lost in Adam at the beginning of time, and indeed with a fuller blessing. For Adam was made immortal, in that he could not die if he kept the command; but the children of the resurrection will be immortal, in that they can never die nor be affected by the fear of death. Concerning the receiving of this robe the Apostle says, *For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality*.[337] Where the word 'clothe' is used, it of course signifies that the nakedness was removed, which Adam and Eve blushed for in themselves when they recognized it. **/70/**

333 Gen. 3:20 is in the form of an etymology, which Bede accepts. Cf. Augustine, *DGCM* 2.21.31 (CSEL 91, 153–54). There is in Hebrew a phonetic similarity between the name 'Eve' and a verbal root meaning 'to live'. See Alter, p. 27, note.

334 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.39 (CSEL 28.1, 373). Augustine is careful to insist upon the reality of the literal meaning of the text, even when he sees its significance as primarily allegorical.

335 Augustine, *DGCM* 2.21.32 (CSEL 91, 155–56).

336 Cf. Luke 15:11-22.

337 1 Cor. 15:53.

[3:22a/b] And he said, Behold Adam is become as one of us, knowing good and evil. Of this St Augustine says: *Seeing that, by whatever means and however it was said, nevertheless God said it, the fact that he said 'one of us' can only be understood if the plural number is accepted for the sake of the Trinity, just as it was said, 'Let us make man',*[338] *and just as the Lord said of himself and his father, 'we will come to him, and will make our abode with him'.*[339] *The proud one turned it over and over in his head, until finally he desired what was suggested by the serpent, 'you shall be as gods'.*[340] *'Behold', he says, 'Adam is become as one of us'. For these are the words of God, not so much mocking him, as discouraging others from being proud in this way, for whose sake these things were written. 'He is become', he says, 'just as one of us, knowing good and evil'. How else can this be understood except as having been intended as a deterrent for the sake of inculcating fear, because not only did he not become what he wished to become, but he did not keep what he had become?*[341] Elsewhere, Augustine says of this: *The words, 'Behold Adam is become as one of us',*[342] *are not those of God conceding, but rather reproaching, just as the Apostle, when he says, 'Pardon me this injury',*[343] *certainly wants it to be understood in the opposite sense.*[344]

[3:22c-23] Now, therefore, lest perhaps he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever. The Lord sent him out of the paradise of pleasure to work the earth from which he was taken. *The first of these two verses are the words of God, but this action followed on account of those words. For not only was he banished from the life which he was to have received with the angels, if he had kept the command, but also from that which he led in paradise with a kind of happy condition of the body. Without doubt, he had to be separated from the tree of life, both because by its means that happy condition of the body itself would remain in him with invisible power deriving from the visible thing, and also because in it was the visible sacrament of the invisible wisdom. Hence he certainly had to be removed, both because he was now going to die, and also because he was, as it were, excommunicated, just as in this paradise*

338 Gen. 1:26.
339 John 14:23.
340 Gen. 3:5.
341 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.39 (CSEL 28.1, 374).
342 Bede gives the Vulgate reading in place of Augustine's Old-Latin text.
343 2 Cor. 12:13.
344 Augustine, *Contra aduersarium* 1.15.23 (CCSL 49, 52–53).

as well, that is, in the Church, men are liable to be removed from the visible sacraments of the altar by church discipline.[345] **/71/**

[3:24] And he cast out Adam, and placed before the paradise of pleasure Cherubim, and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. The old translation puts this passage thus: *And he cast out Adam and placed him opposite to the paradise of pleasure, and appointed Cherubim and a flaming sword*,[346] and so forth. If we follow this translation, we must believe *that it happened for the sake of its allegorical meaning, but nevertheless that it happened, that the sinner dwelt, certainly in misery, opposite to paradise, by which was signified spiritually the blessed life*.[347] But that God is said to have placed Cherubim and a flaming sword before the paradise of pleasure, *this we must believe was indeed done by heavenly powers in the visible paradise, so that by angelic assistance there would be a kind of fiery sentinel at that place; but it is certain that it was not done without reason, since it signifies something also of the spiritual paradise*.[348] Also *this* sentinel is appropriately asserted to be '*turning every way*', *so that it could also be removed, because and when the time came*.[349] For it was removed when Enoch was translated from sinners;[350] it was removed when Elijah was caught up in a fiery chariot;[351] it was removed for all the elect when the heavens were opened for the Lord after he was baptised;[352] it is removed likewise for each of the elect singly when they are washed in the font of baptism; it is removed for them more perfectly when, freed from the chains of the flesh, they ascend, each in his own time, to the glory of the heavenly paradise. Likewise, because *Cherubim* means '*multitude of knowledge*'[353] or '*knowledge multiplied*',[354] *Cherubim, and a flaming sword* is properly asserted to have been *placed to keep the way of the tree of life*, because truly the return to the heavenly fatherland, from which we departed through the foolishness of transgression and the appetite for carnal pleasures, lies open to us through the discipline of heavenly knowledge and the labour of temporal afflictions. And it properly says not simply that a

345 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.40 (CSEL 28.1, 375).
346 From Augustine, *DGAL* 11.40 (CSEL 28.1, 375).
347 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.40 (CSEL 28.1, 375).
348 Augustine, *DGAL* 11.40 (CSEL 28.1, 375).
349 Gregory, *Moralia* 12.9.13 (CCSL 143A, 636).
350 Cf. Sirach 44:16.
351 Cf. 2 Kings/4 Kings 2:11.
352 Cf. Luke 3:21.
353 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Exod. (CCSL 72, 74), etc.
354 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 63), etc.

flame, but that a flaming sword was placed before paradise, in order to make known that the enticements of temporal desire in us must be slain by the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, if we desire to make our way to the tree of life, which is Christ the Lord. **/72/** It properly mentions that the same sword is *turning every way* to indicate mystically that this sword is not always necessary for us, but, as it is written, that there is *a time of war, a time of peace*[355] – of war, namely, when in the stadium of this life we contend against the demons of the air and even the vices of our mind and body; of peace, however, when we are crowned with a complete victory and are eternally sated with the fruit of the tree of life without being nauseated.[356]

But the adversary of the Law and the prophets puts the question, *to whom was this tree which bore the fruit of life in paradise useful?* In response, St Augustine says to him: *To whom, unless first to those first humans who had been placed in paradise? Then, when they had been cast out of paradise in recompense for their sin, it remained as a reminder to signify the spiritual tree of life, that is, the wisdom of the blessed, the* immortal *food of souls. But whether anyone now enjoys that food, unless perhaps Enoch and Elijah, I think ought not to be asserted lightly. But unless the souls of the blessed were fed by that tree of life, which is in the spiritual paradise, we would not read that paradise had been granted on that same day to the soul of the robber who believed in Christ as a reward for his piety and most faithful confession. 'Amen', he says, 'I say to you, this day you shall be with me in paradise'.*[357] *For to be there with Christ, this is to be with the tree of life; he is indeed Wisdom, of which it is written, 'She is the tree of life for all embracing her'.*[358] Amen. **/73/**

355 Ecclesiastes 3:8.

356 MS S ends here. Since it and MS E, which has already broken off with missing folios, are the only witnesses of the 'second recension' (Ia + Ib) of *On Genesis*, it is unclear whether Ib ended at this point or included the final quotation from Augustine which brings the present book 1 to an end (although Laistner [*Hand-List*, p. 41] says that this 'must … have been added later when he enlarged the commentary').

357 Luke 23:43.

358 Augustine, *Contra aduersarium* 1.15.26 (CCSL 49, 54); Proverbs 3:18 (Old-Latin text from Augustine).

BOOK TWO

[4:1] And Adam knew Eve his wife, who conceived and brought forth Cain, saying, I have possessed a man through God. From here on, after the delights of paradise and the sin of the first transgression, the deeds of this world and of mortal life are narrated, when the first humans, who had been created immortal, after receiving the condition of mortality, began to bring forth from themselves a generation of mortals, who were all conceived in sin, and in faults proceeding from the maternal womb. And *Cain means 'possession'*. The mother herself explained the reason for this name when she said, *I have possessed a man through God*.[1] And in this saying, our mother teaches us with already universal discernment that she bore a son guilty of the sin of her own transgression in such a way that nevertheless she possessed this, that he was born a man, that is, that he was born consisting of a soul and body, by the effect of the divine creation and by the gift of the first blessing.

[4:2a] And again she brought forth his brother Abel. *Abel means 'mourning'*[2] or '*mournful*'.[3] By this name the lamentable condition of his untimely death in the prime of life was foreshadowed. For although *precious in the sight of the Lord* is *the death of his saints*,[4] after the cup of the salvific passion has been tasted, nevertheless in the human view of things, it is mournful enough that we had receded so far from the innocence of the first creation that those who were first brought forth into the world as brothers with the same parents should not have been able to maintain peace and harmony between themselves, but that one should have killed the other out of envy, while they were still with their parents the sole lords of the whole world – plainly even then foreshadowing that the saints in this life were going to suffer affliction and death at the hands of the wicked. In this connection it

1 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest.* 4.1 (CCSL 72, 6); Isidore, *Etym.* 7.6.7. Cain actually means 'smith'. Alter (p. 29) explains this as a punning association of the name Cain with a Hebrew verb meaning 'to acquire'.

2 Isidore, *Etym.* 7.6.8.

3 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 60).

4 Ps. 115:15 (116:15).

should be noted also that Cain was the first born in this life but that Abel was the first taken from this life, doubtless because properly speaking this life is the life of the wicked, from which they are cast down into eternal death. But the life of the elect is properly the life which is to come, to which in order that they may come the more blessedly, they are *killed* in this life daily and are *counted as sheep for the slaughter*.[5] **/74/**

[4:3-4a] And it came to pass after many days that Cain offered of the fruits of the earth gifts to the Lord. Abel also offered of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat. It is plainly shown that both brothers had faith in God; both, either urged by nature or taught by their parents, knew that gifts should be offered to God and that the sin of the paternal transgression should be purged by sacrifices offered to him. But because they did not make the offerings with the same feelings, the offerings of each were not equally received. For I do not think that Cain sinned in this either because he practised the work of a farmer or because he offered gifts to God from the fruits of the earth, but because he did not labour with perfect piety in carrying out the business of the flesh and because he did not come as a suppliant with perfect devotion to offer gifts to God.[6] So, for example, *Noah, a husbandman, tilled the ground*, and *planted a vineyard*,[7] and *Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, offered* from the fruits of the earth *bread and wine*.[8] Therefore Cain was not condemned because the kind of offering he made was worthless, for he offered to God from that by which he was himself accustomed to live. But because of the unrighteous mind of the offerer, he was cast down together with his gifts by the one who looks into the heart, as the following words make clear, when it is said:

[4:4b-5a] And the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offerings. But to Cain and his offerings he had no respect. For it does not say, 'And the Lord had respect to the offerings of Abel and to him; but to the offerings of Cain and to him he had no respect'. Rather, it is first declared that the person of the one making the offering was or was not acceptable to God, and then that the offerings were or were not respected. For men are often placated by the gifts of those by whom they had been offended; but God, who is *a*

5 Ps. 43:22 (44:22).

6 Bede here opposes the view of Ambrose (*De Cain et Abel* 1.10.42 [CSEL 32, 373–74]), who argues for the superior value of an animal over a plant offering on the ground that animals, having the spirit or breath of life, are closer to the spiritual than plants, which lack it.

7 Cf. Gen. 9:20.

8 Cf. Gen. 14:18.

discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,[9] is placated by no gift more than by the pious devotion of the one making the offering – he, who, after he has tested the purity of our heart, will subsequently also accept the offerings of our prayers and works.

[4:5b] And Cain was exceedingly angry and his countenance fell. Hence Cain knew that the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offerings, but that he averted his face from himself and from his offerings, unless, as some have translated, *The Lord kindled upon Abel and his sacrifice, but upon Cain and his sacrifice he did not kindle*,[10] that is, he received the sacrificial victim of Abel with fire sent **/75/** from heaven, which we read happened very frequently to holy men making offerings.[11] But Cain had to consume his own sacrifice with fire. For the Apostle seems to signify this, when he says, *By faith Abel offered to God a sacrifice exceeding that of Cain, by which he obtained a testimony that he was just, God giving testimony to his gifts*.[12] Therefore God gave testimony to the gifts of Abel by fire, by accepting them from heaven. By this testimony of the Apostle we are also taught that the sacrificial victim of Abel was made acceptible to God by the devotion of his faith, and, on the other hand, we must assume that Cain was therefore a reprobate, because he did not serve his Creator with complete faith.

[4:6-7b] And the Lord said to him, Why are you angry[13] and why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not receive, but if ill, shall not your sin forthwith be present at the door? *'Why',* he says, *'are you angry', and tormented by the spite of envy against your brother, why do you let your face fall upon the ground? 'If* you do *well',* if you offer a sacrifice with a pure mind, 'shall you not receive', with the Lord having respect to you and to your sacrifice? 'But *if you do ill,* shall not sin forthwith be present at the door', *and shall you not* always *be accompanied by such a gatekeeper*

9 Hebr. 4:12.

10 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 4.4-5 (CCSL 72, 6). The translator whom Jerome quotes in Latin is Theodotion (*fl.* 180), whose Greek translation of the Old Testament is a partial revision of the Septuagint.

11 E.g., Lev. 9:24, Judges 6:21, 1 Kings/3 Kings 18:38, etc.

12 Hebr. 11:4.

13 Bede's text here reads *quare iratus es* in common with many Vulgate manuscripts, but not the Codex Amiatinus, which reads *quare mestus es*. See Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament*, p. 145. This is only one of a number of examples that could be cited from *In Genesim* that shows that the Wearmouth-Jarrow community possessed two or more independently produced versions of the Vulgate (the exemplar for the Codex Amiatinus plus another or others). For additional examples, see Marsden, pp. 209–11.

on entering and exiting?[14] Instead of, *May the Lord keep your coming in and your going out*,[15] and as is said of Wisdom, *He that awakes early to seek her shall not labour, for he shall find her sitting at his door*,[16] and again, *For she goes about seeking such as are worthy of her, and she shows herself to them cheerfully in the ways, and meets them with all providence*.[17]

[4:7c] But the lust thereof shall be under you, and you shall have dominion over it. In conformity with the idiom of the Hebrew language, Scripture has employed the indicative mood for the imperative. There are numerous examples of this: *you shall love the Lord your God*;[18] *you shall love your neighbour*;[19] *you shall not play the harlot*;[20] *you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness*,[21] instead of: 'Love' and 'do not kill'; 'do not play the harlot'; 'do not steal, do not bear false witness'.[22] Therefore it says, *But the lust thereof shall be under you, and you shall have dominion over it*, because you have free will, I advise that you restrain the desire for sin by which you are assailed, and lest it have dominion over you **/76/** by growing greater, that you have dominion over it by living more righteously. The old translation puts this passage thus: *Have you not sinned, if you offer correctly, but do not divide it properly? Be still, for it will return to you, and you will have dominion over it*.[23] For *an offering is made correctly to God, to whom alone we ought to sacrifice. But it is not divided correctly, when neither the places nor the times of offerings, nor the things themselves that are offered, nor the one who makes the offering, nor those to whom what is offered is distributed for eating, are discerned correctly, so that here we may understand division to mean discrimination.*[24]

14 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 4.6 (CCSL 72, 7). Jerome and Bede are both working with different translations and paraphrases of the biblical text.

15 Ps. 120:8 (121:8).

16 Wisdom 6:15.

17 Wisdom 6:17.

18 Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27.

19 Matt. 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8; cf. Lev. 19:18; Luke 10:27.

20 Hosea 3:3.

21 Matt. 19:18; Luke 18:20; cf. Exod. 20:15-16; Deut. 5:19-20; Rom. 13:9. Strictly speaking, only the quotations from the Old Testament are translations from the Hebrew, and where there is a difference between the phrasing in the Old and New Testaments, Bede takes his examples from the New. But, of course, the New Testament phrasing in Greek or Aramaic is influenced by the idiom of the Old, which is Bede's point.

22 Evidently, Bede regards the negative hortatory subjunctive as the formal equivalent of the positive imperative.

23 Gen. 4:7, from Augustine.

24 Augustine, *DCD* 15.7 (CCSL 48, 460). Bede slightly abridges Augustine's text.

However, it cannot easily be discovered in which of these ways Cain displeased the Lord. *But since the apostle John, when he was speaking of these brothers, said, 'Not as Cain, who was of the wicked one, and killed his brother. And wherefore did he kill him? Because his own works were wicked, and his brother's just',*[25] *we are given to understand that God did not have respect to his gift for this reason, that he divided it wickedly, giving something of his own to God, but giving himself to himself, which all do who, not following the will of God, but their own, that is, not living uprightly, but with a perverse heart, nevertheless offer to God a gift. Thereby they think that they are bribing him, not to assist in curing their depraved desires, but in carrying them out … 'Be still', it says, 'for it will return to you, and you will have dominion over it'*.[26]

Cease to pine from the sin of envy against your brother, because the return of this sin of yours will be to you, and your iniquity will redound upon your head, *and you will have dominion over it*, since you have it in your power through the grace of the divine assistance that you have received to repel depravity from your heart. These things *God spoke to Cain, in the way in which he used to speak with the first humans, by means of a creature subject to him in a suitable form as if he were their companion*. But since he was admonished not inwardly but from without, he nevertheless performed the *crime* that he had resolved upon *by killing his brother even after the word of divine admonition* and rebuke.[27] For this follows:

[4:8] And Cain said to Abel his brother, Let us go forth into the field. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and slew him. Here is demonstrated both the treachery of Cain and the innocence of Abel: the innocence indeed of Abel, in that the brother followed his brother, who was older but burning with hostile hatred toward himself, simply **/77/** because he was ordered as a brother; but the treachery of Cain, in that he leads his brother, whom he is about to kill, out of doors, as if he could avoid the divine presence in a more remote place, neither reflecting on the fact, nor understanding, that he who knew the secrets of his heart,[28] which he rebuked, could also observe whither he withdrew himself and what he was doing in secret.

[4:9a] And the Lord said to Cain, Where is your brother Abel? *He does*

25 1 John 3:12.
26 Augustine, *DCD* 15.7 (CCSL 48, 460–61).
27 Augustine, *DCD* 15.7 (CCSL 48, 459–60).
28 Cf. 1 Cor. 14:25.

not, as if in ignorance, question him to learn from him, but like a judge he interrogates the culprit in order to punish him.[29]

[4:9b] And he answered, I know not. Am I my brother's keeper? His answer is at once foolish and arrogant: foolish, since he supposed that God can be deceived, who, like a witness of secrets, made clear his own knowledge of the sinner and of the fratricide before the crime was committed; arrogant, since, in the manner of a stubborn slave, he denied that he was his brother's keeper, when, in his capacity as older brother, in plain good reason he ought to have taken care of his younger brother if any danger threatened, and to have guarded him from the misfortunes assailing him.

[4:10] And he said to him, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the earth. Blood has a great voice, not only Abel's but also that of all those who are killed for the Lord. For the voice of their blood is the very firmness of faith, the very fervour of charity, through which they deserved to suffer for the Lord. It cries to the Lord from the earth, because even if like Abel they should be slain by the wicked in the hidden hollows of the earth, nevertheless the case of their death is precious and clear in the sight of the inward Judge. As a case, it justly demands both that those who have been unjustly done away with in the purity of their faith be crowned with the palm of martyrdom and that those who destroyed them by unjustly persecuting them be damned. Therefore the blood of those who are struck down cries to the Lord, just as the life of those who are accustomed to say, *I have cried out with my whole heart, hear me, Lord, let me seek out your justifications*,[30] is shown to have cried out to him before death. For he, who demands great things, who prays for heavenly things, who hopes for eternal things, who seeks from him not the glory of this age, but the protection of his justifications, cries out to the Lord with his heart. Clearly, the Apostle teaches us whence this cry is born in the hearts of the just, when he says, *God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying: Abba, Father*.[31] For he says, the Spirit crying in **/78/** our hearts to the Father, undoubtedly because he excites our hearts to cry out when he has filled them. John reveals that the souls of the martyrs also have this cry of pious devotion after death, when he says, *I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true,*

29 Augustine, *CF* 12.10 (CSEL 25, 338).
30 Ps. 118:145 (119:145).
31 Gal. 4:6.

do you not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?[32] For these souls of the saints cry out not with the hatred of enemies but with the love of justice, which they had learned always to hunger and thirst for, and with the desire of receiving their own flesh, so that they may deserve to stand by the Lord in the flesh, now immortal and incorruptible, which they had given in death for the Lord. And the voice of their cry is great; great is the desire for justice. But as the blood of the saints cries out to the Lord, that is, demands a just revenge for their unjust killing, what is to be done with their persecutors is shown in the following, when the Lord says to Cain:

[4:11-12] Now, therefore, cursed shall you be upon the earth, which has opened her mouth and received the blood of your brother at your hand. When you shall work it, it shall not yield to you its fruit. A fugitive and a vagabond shall you be upon the earth. The just Judge also apportions the measure of the punishment to the measure of the sinners. For Adam, when he eats what is forbidden, is not cursed himself, but rather the earth is subjected to a curse in his labour, not indeed to the extent that it denies its fruits to the one working it, but that it brings forth its fruits to the tiller of the land who works and sweats, and that the same labour could at some time be finished and eternal rest begin. Also he is sentenced to the death of the flesh; only those who are unable to consider carefully how full of hardship and misery is the life of the present age are in doubt that it was done for the sake of a benefit, lest he should always labour and suffer in this way. In turn, Cain, although he knew the transgression and damnation of his parents, added to the fault of that transgression, which he had derived from stain of original sin,[33] the graver sin of treachery, envy, homicide, and falsehood. Hence, he deserved to be inflicted with a more severe punishment: first, that he would be cursed upon the earth, which, hitherto pure, he had polluted with the blood of his brother; second, that he would sweat in vain tilling the earth, since no abundance of fruits would answer his labours; and third, that on this earth **/79/** he would always be a fugitive and a vagabond, and that he would not dare to have anywhere a quiet home, or, as another translation puts it, that *he would live trembling and groaning upon the earth*. But after having heard the punishment of so great a curse upon himself, *he did not want to entreat for forgiveness, but redoubling his sins with sins, he thought only of crime, which God could not overlook*.[34]

32 Rev. 6:9-10.

33 *Tradux* is the technical term in patristic literature for the hereditary transmission of original sin from Adam and Eve to all their descendants. See Blaise; Niermeyer, s.v. *tradux.*

34 Jerome, *Ep*. 36.2 (CSEL 54, 270).

[4:13-14c] *Finally, he replied* **to the Lord, My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon. Behold you do cast me out this day from your face, and from the face of the earth I shall be hidden, and I shall be a vagabond and a fugitive on the earth**. *'I am cast out', he says, 'from your sight, and not enduring to bear even the light by reason of knowledge of my crime, I shall be hidden in order to be concealed'*.[35] Or indeed: '*you cast me out from the face of the earth*, clearly in order that I not be permitted to remain secure and free in any region of the world nor among any inhabitants of its circle'. Also: '*I shall be hidden from your face*, lest I get to see it again, by contemplating which fairly often, and by hearing your voice, I used to live quite happily'.

[4:14d] Every one, therefore, that finds me, shall kill me. *Since from the quaking of his body and of his enraged mind,* and from the instability of a vagabond and a fugitive*, everyone that finds him realizes that he is one who deserves to be killed. But God, not wishing him to end his torments by the shortcut of death, and not delivering him to the punishment to which he had condemned himself*,[36] says,

[4:15b/c] No, it shall not be so, but whosoever shall kill Cain shall be punished sevenfold. '*You will not die as you think, and you will receive death as a remedy*, but *you will live* for a very long time as an example for others, lest they dare to sin in this manner. So far is it from being the case that I wish you to be killed by anyone, that if anyone should kill you, let him be punished sevenfold, that is, by the heaviest vengeance, since, having been warned by the harshness of your condemnation, he would not hold back his hands from the shedding of blood'. For no one should have killed that man to whom, being a sinner, God had granted life, both as an increase of his punishment and as an example for the caution and correction of others. For Scripture will sometimes signify the plenitude of the thing of which it is speaking by the number seven, as in Leviticus, where it says, *If you walk contrary to me and will not hearken to me, I will bring plagues sevenfold upon you*.[37] And a little **/80/** further on, *and I will strike you seven times for your sins*,[38] for what is done many times. And in a favourable sense the Psalmist says, *Seven times a day I have given praise to you*,[39] which is

35 Jerome, *Ep.* 36.2 (CSEL 54, 270).
36 Jerome, *Ep*. 36.2 (CSEL 54, 270–71).
37 Lev. 26:21.
38 Lev. 26:24.
39 Ps. 118:164 (119:164).

to say in other words, *his praise shall always be in my mouth*.[40] Because indeed the old translators said, *Anyone who shall kill Cain shall pay seven penalties*,[41] which has this meaning: *You will live to the seventh generation, and you will be tormented by the fire of your conscience, so that whoever shall kill you, according to a double understanding, will either release you in the seventh generation or from* great *torment – not that he who shall kill Cain be subjected to seven vengeances, but that the murderer, killing him who had been left to the penalty of life, pay seven penalties, which were current in Cain all the time*.[42] For the seventh from Adam was Lamech by whom Cain is said to have been killed; and he freed this same Cain by death from the seven penalties, which, sinning in a sevenfold way, he merited. For *his first sin* is *that,* offering to God*, he did not divide it rightly; his second, that he envied his brother; his third, that he acted deceitfully, saying,* 'Let us go forth *in* the field'*;*[43] *his fourth, that he killed; his fifth, that he shamelessly denied it, saying, 'I know not';*[44] *his sixth, that he condemned himself, saying, 'My* iniquity *is greater than that* I may deserve pardon'*;*[45] *his seventh, that, having been condemned, he did not do penance*.[46]

[4:15d] And God set a sign upon Cain, that whosoever found him should not kill him. The sign itself was, of course, that he would live, always trembling and groaning, and a vagabond and a fugitive, but reminded by this same affliction of his that he was not permitted to be killed at random by just anyone. For anyone who killed him would not only free Cain from great afflictions but by doing so would subject himself to a sevenfold penalty.

[4:16a] And Cain went out from the face of the Lord, that is, from the inmost shrines of those buildings, in which up to then, while living with his parents, he very often used to see him in the form of an angel.

[4:16a] And dwelt as a fugitive on the earth at the east side of Eden. *Eden* means 'pleasure' or '*delights*',[47] by which name is signified paradise, concerning which it is said above, *And the Lord God planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning*.[48] The old interpreters translated this, *And the Lord God planted a paradise in Eden over against the east*, from which

40 Ps. 33:2 (34:1).
41 Gen. 4:15, from Jerome.
42 Jerome, *Ep*. 36.2 (CSEL 54, 271).
43 Gen. 4:8, from the Vulgate (as altered by Bede above) instead of Jerome.
44 Gen. 4:9.
45 Gen. 4:13.
46 Jerome, *Ep*. 36.6 (CSEL 54, 273–74).
47 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 2.8; 2.15 (CCSL 72, 4); Isidore, *Etym*. 14.3.2.
48 Gen. 2:8.

we are given to understand **/81/** that paradise was placed in the east side of the world. Therefore Cain did not dwell in the east side of paradise, else he would dwell beyond this world, but in the eastern parts of the world to which paradise is close at hand, although inaccessible and unknown to mortals.

[Mystical interpretation[49] of Genesis 4:2-4:16]

But all the things which are said literally about the justice and martyrdom of Abel and the wickedness and damnation of Cain bear witness mystically to the Lord's passion and his manner of life in the flesh and to the persecution and perdition of the Jews. For not without reason the Lord himself says to these same Jews, *If you did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe me also; for he wrote of me*.[50] Therefore Cain was the firstborn, and Abel the second. The Jewish people were the first possession[51] of God, as he himself says to Moses, *Israel is my firstborn son*;[52] the second possession of God is the Gentiles, for the sake of whose life the Son of God deigned both to be born in the flesh and to die. *Abel was a shepherd* [4:2], and the Lord says, *I am the good shepherd*.[53] But *Cain was a husbandman* [4:2], because the Jewish people busied themselves with their earthly and temporal affairs, either pursuing them exclusively or serving God for their sake, and understanding carnally, as one might expect, those things concerning the divine promise which the Prophets spoke to them about mystically, saying, *If you be willing and will hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land*.[54]

For *Cain* offered *of the fruits of the earth gifts to the Lord* [4:3], because the Jewish people thought that they were acceptable to the Lord on account of the good works that they pursued for the sake of earthly reward. And indeed they offered *of the fruits of the earth gifts*, when, believing that they were justified by *earthly circumcision, the earthly sabbath, earthly unleavened bread, and the earthly Passover*,[55] the same people scorned to accept the righteousness of faith which is in Christ.

Abel also offered of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat [4:4], because the Lord, in accordance with the form of his borrowed humanity, interceding

49 Jones's rubric.
50 John 5:46.
51 An echo of Gen. 4:1. See above, *In Gen.* 2.1-15 (p. 140).
52 Exod. 4:22.
53 John 10:11.
54 Isa. 1:19.
55 Augustine, *CF* 12.11 (CSEL 25, 340).

with the Father on behalf of the saints, offers to him their prayers, that is to say, their good works and the fat of their inward love of God. For these are the firstlings of his flock and of their **/82/** fat.

The Lord has respect *to Abel* [4:4], saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*.[56]

And he has respect *to his offerings* [4:4], because God the Father accepts the life of the elect which he gladly offers to him, and he burns, as it were, the sacrificial victim with fire from heaven,[57] because he himself by the power of his breath kindles those who have taken care to mortify themselves for the Lord, so that they may burn the more brightly among the heavenly beings, or rather be made entirely divine.

But to Cain and his offerings he had no respect [4:5], because, rebuking the carnal works of the Jews, he says through the Prophet: *To what purpose* [*do you offer*[58]] *me the multitude of your victims, says the Lord? I am full, I desire not holocausts of rams and fat of fatlings and blood of bulls and buck goats and calves*.[59] And a little after: *For your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, be clean*,[60] that is to say, through faith in the grace of Christ. Cain is angered by the piety of his brother, and having been rebuked by the Lord he does not recover from the rage he caught from envy. How much the Jews have raged with envy against the Lord and the grace of the New Covenant, and how many times, after having been rebuked and warned by him, they have nevertheless persevered in wicked undertakings, the narrative of the Gospels suffices to show.

What is said of Cain, that *his countenance fell* [4:5], is in accordance with these facts, for they could not see the glory of the Lord after his countenance was revealed. For they had lost that joy of the divine grace, about which the just, glorying in it, say, *The light of your countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us, you have given gladness in my heart*.[61]

And Cain led his brother out and killed him in the field [cf. 4:8]. The

56 Matt. 3:17; 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17; cf. Mark 1:11; Luke 9:35.

57 In my edition of the Douay-Rheims version of the Bible, revised by Bishop Challoner, appears the following note on Gen. 4:4: 'That is, shewed his acceptance of his sacrifice (as coming from a heart full of devotion): and that, as we may suppose, by some visible token, such as sending fire from heaven upon his offerings'. The idea comes from Theodotion's translation of Gen. 4:4-5, as recorded by Jerome. See above, *In Gen.* 2.69-73 (p. 142) and note 10.

58 This phrase is not in the Vulgate or Bede, but is added in Douay-Rheims to complete the sense.

59 Isa. 1:11.

60 Isa. 1:15-16.

61 Ps. 4:7 (4:6-7).

Jewish people led the Lord out of his city Jerusalem and crucified him in the place of Calvary.[62] We are reminded allegorically by the place of both passions *to go forth to* the Lord *beyond the camp, bearing his reproach*,[63] that is, having left behind the community of the world and the society of the wicked, to endure gladly each and every base thing of the world for love of the heavenly fatherland.

When the Lord asks Cain where his brother Abel was, *he replies that he does not know and that he is not his keeper* [4:9]. Up to now, when the Jews are asked by the faithful, namely the members of Christ, about Christ, they say that they do not know. *But they* themselves *would be in a certain measure the keepers of Christ, if they had wished to* receive *and keep the Christian faith. For he who keeps Christ* **/83/** *in his heart, does not say what Cain says*,[64] that he does not know his brother and that he is not his keeper.

God *said to* Cain*, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the earth* [4:10]. *Thus the divine voice reproves the Jews in the Holy Scriptures. For the blood of Christ has a great voice in the earth, when, after he has been accepted by all the nations, he is answered, 'Amen'. This is the clear voice of the blood which the blood itself expresses from the mouth of the faithful who have been redeemed by the same blood*,[65] about which the Apostle justly says to the faithful, *You are come to … Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the sprinkling of blood which speaks better than that of Abel*.[66] The blood of Christ indeed speaks better than that of Abel, because of course the latter cried out to the Lord in condemnation of fratricide, but the former lifts his own voice to heaven for the salvation of the faithful brothers of Christ.

Now, therefore, cursed shall you be upon the earth, which has opened her mouth and received the blood of your brother at your hand [4:11]. 'Earth' indicates the Church; for she, not the other, opens her mouth in the mass to partake of the blood of Christ, which was shed by the hands of the Jewish people. The same people were also cursed upon her, because of course the more firmly she clings to the love of her Creator, the more gravely she realizes that the nation hostile to her has been cursed, although that nation itself still proudly boasts that it has been specially blessed.

62 Cf. Matt. 27:33; Mark 15:22; Luke 23:33; John 19:17.
63 Hebr. 13:13.
64 Augustine, *CF* 12.10 (CSEL 25, 338–39).
65 Augustine, *CF* 12.10 (CSEL 25, 339).
66 Hebr. 12:22; 12:24.

When you shall work it, it shall not yield to you its fruit [4:12]. *The* same *people work*ed *our salvation in that earth which* the head of the Church, *Christ, carried, that is, in his flesh, by crucifying him who died for our sins. And the same earth did not give to them* its fruits*, because they were not justified* by faith *in the resurrection of the one who 'rose again for our justification'*[67] *… Whence rising again he did not appear to those by whom he had been crucified, just as the same earth did not show the fruit of its virtue to Cain who worked the earth so that the seed might be planted.*[68] But the Jews worked this earth, which is the Church, by assailing it with their persecutions so that she advanced further toward God, often indeed by raging against many to the death; but they themselves did not deserve to see the fruit of the latter's faith and precious death. But Cain answered this to the Lord:

My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon. Behold you do cast me out this day from the face of the earth, and I shall be hidden **/84/** *from your face, and I shall be a vagabond and a fugitive on the earth* [4:13-14]. It is clearer than day that the *iniquity* of the Jewish people, by virtue of the fact that they killed the son of God, *is greater than that* they *may deserve pardon*; and therefore all those who, being penitent, receive pardon for it are truly saved beyond their own deserving by the grace of divine mercy. It is evident that they have been *cast out from the face of the earth*, that is, from a part in the holy Church, and they have been *hidden from the face* of divine contemplation. This they brought upon themselves, when they covered the face of Christ in the passion;[69] this the heavenly signs also brought upon them, when the sun hid the rays of its light at his crucifixion.[70] And having lost their kingdom, they are scattered everywhere throughout the world, fugitives and vagabonds, fearing lest they also be deprived of temporal life itself, and they say, as it were, with Cain,

Every one, therefore, that finds me, shall kill me [4:14]. *But what does God reply to him? 'No, it shall not be so, but whosoever shall kill Cain, shall pay seven penalties'.*[71] *That is, the unbelieving race of the carnal Jews will not perish through the death of the body. For whoever will destroy them 'shall pay seven penalties', that is, will remove from them the seven penalties by which they are bound on account of the sin of having killed Christ, so that,*

67 Rom. 4:25.
68 Augustine, *CF* 12.11 (CSEL 25, 340–41).
69 Cf. Mark 14:65; Luke 22:64.
70 Cf. Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44-45.
71 Gen. 4:15, partly from Augustine.

in all this time, which revolves in the sevenfold order of days,[72] *especially since the Jewish nation did not perish, it may satisfactorily appear to the Christian faithful how much those who killed the Lord under their proud authority deserved subjugation*.[73] I have set down the interpretation of this passage according to the old translation, because I have taken it, like much else besides, from the works of St Augustine, who was following it.[74]

And God set a sign upon Cain, that whosoever found him should not kill him [4:15]. *The Jewish nation* has, *whether under pagan or under Christian kings, the sign of its Law, by which it is distinguished from other nations and peoples; and every emperor or king, who finds them in his kingdom, finds them with this sign and does not kill them: that is, he does not prevent them from being practising Jews, as long as they are set apart from association with other nations by some fixed and particular sign of their observance, except those of them who have been converted to Christ*.[75]

And Cain went out from the face of the Lord and dwelt as a fugitive on **/85/** *the earth at the east side of Eden* [4:16]. By '*the face of the Lord*' is usually understood knowledge of him, whereby he manifests himself and is recognized. Deservedly, therefore, the people who withdrew from the grace of divine knowledge are considered to dwell *on the earth*. For they cannot say with the elect, *But our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ*.[76] The Seventy Translators[77] rendered this passage thus: *But Cain went out from the face of the Lord God, and dwelt in the land of Naid opposite Eden*.[78] But Naid, which several commentators, with whom Josephus is in agreement as well, assert is the place where Cain dwelt, means 'fugitive', or, as we find in the book of Hebrew names, 'unsteady *motion*' and '*fluctuation*'.[79] Furthermore, our translator[80] understood that this is not the name of a place, but an indication

72 This seemingly strained periphrasis for the stretch of time from the Crucifixion to the present enables Augustine to find another mystical signification for Cain's seven penalties based on the number seven in the seven days of the week.

73 Augustine, *CF* 12.12 (CSEL 25, 341–42).

74 On Bede's anti-Semitism, see Introduction, pp. 21–27.

75 Augustine, *CF* 12.13 (CSEL 25, 342).

76 Philipp. 3:20.

77 *Septuaginta interpretes* (or *translatores*) is Bede's regular phrase for the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint or the Latin translations of it that preceded Jerome's Vulgate. It was believed to have been the inspired work of seventy-two translators.

78 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 4.16 (CCSL 72, 7); Isidore, *Quaestiones* 1.6.19 (PL 83, 226).

79 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 69); Josephus, *Ant.* 1.1.2.

80 I.e., Jerome.

of the reality itself, that Cain would always be *unsteady* and *in turmoil* and *of uncertain habitation*s.[81] Just how much this applies to the present condition of the Jews, the whole world is a witness. They are also rightly said to *dwell opposite Eden*[82] (Eden, of course, signifies 'pleasure' or 'delights'), because that faithless people, having turned away from knowledge of the truth, are truly involved in earthly pursuits to such an extent that they live entirely in conflict with heavenly delights, and because they thirst only for temporal joys, they are adverse to the streams of divine pleasure, by which the just are given drink for the thirsty mouth of the heart.

[End of mystical interpretation]

[4:17] And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and brought forth Enoch. And he built a city and called its name by the name of his son Enoch. Just as from the very beginning of time the passions of the saints were announced in the killing of Abel, and the faithlessness of the damned in the malice and persecution of Cain, both of which are going to endure in the world to the end of time, so also in the city which Cain built it was announced allegorically that the whole hope of the wicked was to be fixed upon the kingdom of this world and upon good fortune, seeing that they had neither faith nor a desire for future blessings. The Lord speaks of the city in the words of the prophet Hosea, *I am God and not man, the holy one in the midst of you, and I will not enter into* **/86/** *the city*.[83] For we do not read that either Abel or Seth, who was born in his place, built a city or houses. Since they certainly designed them, they were rather the firstlings of those who rejoice to sing to their Creator, *For I am a sojourner with you in the land, and a stranger as all my fathers were*.[84] In close harmony with this is the promise of the Lord that I just mentioned, *I am God and not man, the holy one in the midst of you*, because those who estrange themselves from participation in the worldly city become more worthy of this indwelling of their Creator. And Cain aptly *called the name* of the city *by the name of his son Enoch* in order to signify that he would have the kind of successors who, deprived of the heavenly fatherland, would fix their hearts upon the pleasures of this life. And Enoch *is* properly *interpreted as 'dedication*',[85] because in the first generation the wicked 'dedicate', as it were, a city, which

81 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 4.16 (CCSL 72, 7); Isidore, *Quaestiones* 1.6.19 (PL 83, 226).
82 Augustine, *CF* 12.13 (CSEL 25, 343).
83 Hosea 11:9.
84 Ps. 38:13 (39:12); Ps. 118:19 (119:19).
85 Augustine, *DCD* 15.19 (CCSL 48, 481).

they build for themselves, since they long to take pleasure in those things which are done in the present.

But on the other hand, in that branch of the human race which descends from Seth to Noah is born Enoch, *the seventh from Adam*,[86] who, as we read, *walked with God, and was seen no more, because God took him*.[87] Since of course all the rest and joy and hope of the elect is only in the sabbath to come,[88] the elect, after they walk with the Lord in this life, humbly following his commandments, are borne by him into the life of perpetual repose, and do not appear again among mortals, because they are living immortally with him. For they are his city and temple. In this life they strive for perfection by daily accomplishments of good works; in that life, with their labours at an end, they reign with him, and in their dedication to him, which will be celebrated perpetually by the presence of the Holy Spirit, each one rejoices, as it were, in the name of Enoch.

[4:18-20a] And Enoch begot Irad, and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methusael, and Methusael begot Lamech, who took two wives; the name of the one was Adah and the name of the other Zillah. And Adah brought forth Jabal. The race of Cain is reckoned up to the seventh generation, and in this generation he was killed by Lamech[89] and freed from the seven penalties **/87/** which he wretchedly bore for such a very long time. In this generation the whole race that descended from him (after, to add to the curse, it was also polluted by the adultery of Lamech) perished in the violent assault of the flood. In fact it was defiled in the sixth generation by adultery, but destroyed in the seventh by the flood. By this it is made known spiritually that the city of the faithless, that is, the whole fellowship of the wicked, will corrupt itself by its crimes in the six ages of this world, but in the seventh, which is in the future, it will perish forever.[90] For just as Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was caught up into paradise, and no one saw him because he lives in peace with God,[91] so the seventh from

86 Jude 14 (counting inclusively, beginning with Adam, who is the first).

87 Gen. 5:24.

88 *In futuro sabbato* refers to the seventh age and provides an implicit mystical interpretation based on the number seven.

89 See Bede's discussion of Gen. 4:23, below. Just as there are two Enochs (one of the race of Cain, the other of the race of Seth), there are two Lamechs (one of the race of Cain, the other of the race of Seth).

90 See Bede's excursion on the six ages of the world, *In Gen.* 1.1093-1224 (above, pp. 100–105).

91 Cf. Gen. 5:24. Bede's phrasing, *Enoch raptus est*, is a key, both etymologically and textually, to the source of the notion of 'the rapture', which is sweeping through Evangelical Christian groups in North America at the present time. See Moyers, 'Welcome to Doomsday'.

Cain, Jabal, which means '*changed*',[92] was destroyed with his brothers and the whole race by the flood,[93] and no one saw him because he was punished by eternal death, and he was 'changed' from the glory of the world which he had loved to that punishment which he did not foresee. By all this, it is clearly signified, as I have said, that the saints progress toward rest in another life after the six ages of this world, and the damned toward punishment, as the story that the Lord tells of the poor man Lazarus and the proud rich man also plainly proves.[94]

[4:20a-22b] Adah, it says, **brought forth Jabal, who was the father of such as dwell in tents and of herdsmen. And his brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of them that play upon the harp and the pipe.[95] Zillah also brought forth Tubal-Cain, who was a smith in every work of brass and iron**. All these things which the sons of Lamech are said to have invented and done pertain to the refinement and the embellishment and the charms of this life. However we do not read that either Abel, or Seth who was born in his place, or his nephews did any such things; but they are found to have led a simple life as strangers on earth. For although Abel was a herdsman of sheep, nevertheless he did not want to devote himself to this employment to the extent of building tents for himself in which he could work at this more comfortably. And God forbid that so great a man should have given any time to the harp and the pipe! Anyone who truly contemplates all the works that are made with skill from brass and iron clearly learns that if the human race kept the natural law correctly, even after being driven from the joys of paradise by the sin **/88/** of the transgression, it would not have had need for any of these things at all. Hence it is a fact that all these things were invented by the children of the curse, although presently, as the human race degenerated from the purity of its first manner of life, even good servants of God sometimes worked hard at things of this kind for the sake of fellowship in social life. But certainly there is a great difference, because of course the wicked delighted in such things as if they were their highest good. But the elect either renounce these things entirely, or use them in passing for the sake of some proper purpose of this life until they reach eternity,

92 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 67).

93 For the apparent contradiction with Gen. 4:20-21, see n. 95, below.

94 Cf. Luke 16:19-31.

95 The statement that the children of Lamech and Adah were the fathers of all future shepherds and musicians seems to contradict the story of Noah's flood in which all mankind except Noah and his family are destroyed. Alter (p. 32, n. 20) explains that 'he was the father of' in Hebrew is equivalent to 'he was the first'.

just as a traveller uses a stable or travelling money. So, for example, the patriarchs used to dwell in tents, but like strangers in this world, in contrast to those who were accustomed to live in cities and houses like citizens of the earth. Singers of psalms used the harp and the pipe, but for the sake of praising the Lord with them; and, on the other hand, the Prophet censures those who performed on the harp, the tambour, and the lyre at feasts.[96] There were among the people of God men instructed in *every work of brass and iron*, as well as of silver and gold; but God ordered them to turn this skill to the construction of his tabernacle.[97] And the Prophet, preaching the joys of the Lord's Incarnation, foretold that the injurious works of iron would be destroyed and turned to better uses, saying, *and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they be exercised any more to war*.[98] Nor should we carelessly overlook the fact that it was when men began to be polluted by adultery, when they began to concentrate upon growing their flocks more than was right, when they began to be weakened by musical modes, and when they began to work hard at craftsmen's skills, that they were destroyed by the flood which overwhelmed them unexpectedly. But we must be resourceful in taking care lest the last day find us entangled beyond measure in things of this kind, since the Lord, speaking of the day of Judgement with this time in mind, also inspires us with a desire for caution when he says: *For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not till the flood came and took them all away. So also shall the coming of the Son of man be*.[99]

[4:22c] And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah. Naamah means '*pleasure*'.[100] The lineage of Cain is properly ended in the birth of a woman, and she is named 'Pleasure', because **/89/** all the effort of the wicked is directed toward the allurements of the world, and she desires to conduct life to the end in the satisfying of carnal pleasures. But not long after the birth of this woman, the whole cursed race was destroyed by the flood; because when they bend their mind to the yoke of the world's delights, *when they say 'peace and security', then shall sudden destruction come upon them*.[101]

96 Cf. Isa. 5:12.

97 Cf. Exod., chaps. 25–30; 35–40. Bede begins his commentary in *De tabernaculo* at Exod. 24:12 and takes it to Exod. 30:16.

98 Isa. 2:4.

99 Matt. 24:38-39.

100 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 69).

101 1 Thess. 5:3.

Moreover, it should be noted that it is customary to understand 'delight' or 'pleasure' in two ways, that is, in a good sense and in a bad.[102] It is understood in a good sense, of course, when it says, *But the meek shall possess the land, and* ***shall delight*** *in abundance of peace*;[103] and again when it says, *They shall be inebriated with the plenty of your house; and you shall make them drink of the torrent of your* ***pleasure***.[104] And from this 'pleasure' paradise is given its epithet,[105] because without a doubt man was placed in it so that in that very place he might perpetually enjoy the most blessed and holiest delights of the flesh and the spirit in the presence of his Creator. But 'pleasure' is construed in a bad sense when certain people are stigmatized by the Apostle as *lovers of* ***pleasures*** *more than of God*.[106] With respect to these the name of Naamah is especially suited, in whose generation the first age of the world, with a few exceptions, was destroyed. Accordingly, the human race withdrew from Eden, that is, from the delights of inward goods, and cultivated the earth, having left heavenly things behind, and came as far as the birth of the woman who was called Naamah, that is, 'pleasure'. And shortly thereafter it completely perished in the flood, so that by the birth of such an offspring and by the occurrence of the subsequent disaster it would truly be made known that those who subject themselves to the pleasures of the flesh, to the neglect of the things of the spirit, hasten deservedly to ruin.

Then, too, Naamah was born in the seventh generation from Cain. But if you reckon the generations of Cain from Adam himself, and count up also all the sons of Lamech, you will find that Naamah belongs in the eleventh place. For Lamech is the seventh from Adam, and when you add Lamech's four sons to those seven, you will of course arrive at the number eleven. And the number eleven, which 'transgresses' the number ten, usually signifies sin, because it is accomplished by the transgression of the law of the Ten Commandments. And therefore the wicked generation is rightly ended and completely destroyed in the eleventh number, and this is in the woman, because, scorning what it knows of divine law, while it strives to be satiated with its own depraved pleasures, it makes an unexpected ruin for itself.

[4:23] And Lamech said to his wives Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice, you wives of Lamech, hearken /90/ to my speech: for I have slain a man to the wounding of myself and a stripling to my own bruising.

102 For the concept *in bono et in malo*, see Introduction, p. 18.
103 Ps. 36:11 (37:11).
104 Ps. 35:9 (36:8).
105 I.e., *paradisus uoluptatis*, 'paradise of pleasure', cf. Gen. 2:8 *et passim*.
106 2 Tim. 3:4.

The 'man' or 'stripling', which it speaks of, signifies Cain, whom the same *Lamech killed*, but *not deliberately*, as Jerome asserts was *written in a certain Hebrew scroll*.[107] But he killed him to his wounding and to his own bruising, since in so doing he also took death and damnation upon himself, because he destroyed one whom God had granted life.

[4:24] Sevenfold vengeance shall be taken for Cain, but for Lamech seventy times seven times. Sevenfold vengeance was taken for Cain, because up to the seventh generation he paid the penalty as a vagabond and fugitive for his fratricide and jealousy; but for Lamech seventy times seven times,[108] because, as Jerome testifies was related to him by the Hebrews,[109] and likewise as Josephus affirms, seventy-seven souls were born of the race of Cain, who perished in the flood. And in this number they say that the punishment of Lamech was finished, because his race endured up to the flood.[110] And *Lamech* is interpreted as *'striking'* or *'struck',*[111] either of which interpretation is applicable to the one who not only struck Cain, but also on account of that same parricide was himself struck by divine vengeance. But Lamech mystically signifies the human race, which was not only struck by the deceit of the old enemy in the first parent, but also strikes itself by the daily augmentation of its sins, for which vengeance was taken seventy times seven times, because up to the advent of Christ, who appeared in the world in the seventy-seventh generation, the offence of the first transgression weighed down upon the human race, until by his coming he *took away the sins of the world*[112] and led us into eternal life, which we lost in Adam, when he opened the gates of the heavenly kingdom by his baptism and passion. Therefore the punishment of Lamech ceased at that time, because after the sting of death and sin had been overcome by the passion and resurrection of the Lord, the human race returned to the heavenly kingdom.

[4:25a/c] And Adam knew his wife again, and she brought forth a son and called his name Seth, saying, God has given me another seed for Abel. After Scripture recounted **/91/** that the fratricide Cain had been killed and repeated again that his offspring were cursed in the seventh generation,[113]

107 Jerome, *Ep*. 36.4 (PL 22, 455).

108 The phrase *septuagies septies* is to be understood as 'seventy times' *plus* 'seven times', i.e., 'seventy-seven times'.

109 Jerome, *Ep*. 36.5 (PL 22, 455).

110 Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 1.3.4: Josephus refers to Lamech, but does not make the specific claims that Bede attributes to him.

111 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 68).

112 John 1:29.

113 Cf. Gen. 4:23-24.

it returns to an exposition of the restoration of the holy seed, and declares that it will remain forever after the wicked have perished. And *Seth* means '*appointment' or 'resurrection*'.[114] The reason for this name is revealed, when his parent[115] says:

[4:25c] The Lord has given me another seed for Abel whom Cain slew. He was 'appointed' for Abel not only in order of birth but also, deservedly, of virtue, filling the place of his brother. His devotion of mind is also shown to have passed to his progeny, when this is added:

[4:26] But to Seth also was born a son, whom he called Enosh. This man began to call upon the name of the Lord. Enosh means 'human being' or 'man'. Hence, he who has such a name rightly begins *to call upon the name of the Lord*,[116] imploring so much the more urgently in his daily prayers the help of the Creator as he remembers that he was made of so fragile a nature. And just as Abel having been killed by Cain signifies mystically that the Lord suffered, so Seth born in his place signifies that he was 'aroused again' from death. Hence in the version of the Seventy Translators his father or his mother[117] is aptly reported to have said at his birth, *For God aroused in me another seed for Abel, whom Cain slew*.[118] This is rightly called 'another seed' in accordance with the mystical senses, when the same Lord who was killed rose again, because of course a mortal was killed, but an immortal rose again. He died so that we would not fear to die; he arose in order to bestow on us the hope and faith of rising up again from death. Speaking of our resurrection, the Apostle clearly distinguished the difference between these seeds, when he said, *It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body*.[119] And of the same Lord, he says, *Although he died through weakness, yet he lives by the power of God*.[120] And indeed Enosh, the son of Seth, represents figuratively the Christian people, who through faith and the sacrament of the Lord's passion and resurrection are born daily throughout the whole world from water and the Holy Spirit. For they, preferring the grace of their

114 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 71).

115 The Douay-Rheims and the KJV translations assume (correctly) that the speaker here is Eve, but neither the Vulgate nor the Latin translation of the Septuagint, which Bede quotes below, makes this clear. Hence, Bede allows for either possibility: see below.

116 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 4.26 (CCSL 72, 8).

117 See n. 115 above.

118 Gen. 4:25, from Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 4.25 (CCSL 72, 7).

119 1 Cor. 15:42-44.

120 2 Cor. 13:4.

regeneration to their first generation, in everything **/92/** which they do are accustomed to invoke the help of the name of the Lord, saying, *Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name*,[121] and so forth, of the same Lord's prayer, or of other prayers with which we are accustomed to beseech his grace, without which we are nothing able. Hence, also, we are properly called by the name Enosh, that is, 'human being', on account of our awareness of our weakness. But on account of the hope of our future immortality we prove to be the sons of Seth, that is, of 'resurrection'.

[5:1-2a] This is the book of the generation of Adam. In the day that God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them. *This is the book* of the first creation of man, inasmuch as *God made him in his likeness*, obviously so that through sharing in his goodness he would be forever good, immortal, and happy; and inasmuch as he made *them male and female*, because after they were created he illuminated them with the grace of his blessing. Such was the generation of Adam with his wife on the day when he was created. But, alas! he profaned the likeness of God, by believing the enemy more than the Creator. His first-born son brought upon himself the graver punishment of a curse by envying and killing his brother. Lamech, the seventh from him, broke the established law of male and female, concerning which it had been said, *they shall be two in one flesh*,[122] by taking two wives and joining three in one flesh.[123] And with evils spreading everywhere, so far did the human race recede from the likeness of its Creator and from the first blessing, that in the tenth generation, with the exception of a few, who were confined in the ark, the whole of it deserved to be destroyed. Nevertheless the Creator himself, who deigned to be born in the likeness of our nature, and to be cursed and to die, permitted us to return to this likeness and blessing, so that, having been redeemed by him, we may also deserve to say of him, *We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is*,[124] and to hear from him, *Come, you blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*.[125]

[5:2a] And he called their names Adam in the day when they were created. Adam, like Enosh, means 'man'; but **/93/** Enosh is said to mean

121 Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2.

122 Gen. 2:24.

123 'Bede *imposes* teutonic monogamy upon the Old Testament, not making but assuming the point'. Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', p. 130.

124 1 John 3:2.

125 Matt. 25:34.

'man' in such a way that it is only appropriate to males, whereas Adam means 'man' in such as way that it can be applied to either sex. Hence, it is rightly said that he called their names Adam, that is, 'man'.[126] And just as in Latin the word for 'man', *homo*, derives etymologically from the word for 'earth', *humus*, because it draws the source of its flesh from the ground,[127] so among the Hebrews Adam is named from the earth because man was fashioned from the mud of the earth. Hence, Adam can also be translated as '*earthen*' or '*red earth*'.[128] Then, among the Greeks, the word for 'man' has another derivation: for man is called *anthropos*, from the fact that he is supposed to lift up the eyes of his mind to observe things above and to reflect upon heaven.[129] Moreover, there is also contained in the name Adam, apart from the interpretation according to which it means 'man', another sacred meaning which should not be passed over in silence. For it is made up of the four letters, A, D, A, and M, which are the initial letters of the four quarters of the world, when they are named in Greek. For among the Greeks the east is called *anatole*, the west *disis*, the north *arctos*, and the south *mesembria*; and it was very fitting that the name of the first man, through whose offspring the whole world was to be filled, should mystically contain in itself all the corners of the world.[130] And the fact that it says, '*And he called their names Adam*', and adds, '*in the day when they were created*', clearly makes known that Adam and his wife were made on one and the same day, that is, on the sixth day of the infant world, and that his wife was not created from his side separately after the sixth or seventh day.

[5:3] And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begot a son in his own image and likeness, and he called his name Seth. And indeed Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, because he was made immortal in spirit and flesh. But after he corrupted the image and likeness of God in himself by sinning, *he begot a son in his own image and likeness*, that is, mortal, perishable, capable of reason, bound by the sin of his own transgression, and unable to be loosed except by the grace of his very same Creator. But it should be noted that where our text of the Bible,[131] which has been poured from the Hebrew source, **/94/** has it that Adam lived *a hundred*

126 Cf. Augustine, *DCD* 15.17 (CCSL 48, 479).

127 Cf. Isidore, *Etym.* 11.1.4.

128 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 60); Isidore, *Etym.* 7.6.4.

129 Isidore, *Etym.* 11.1.5.

130 Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes* 95.13.15 (CCSL 39, 1352–53); Ps.-Isidore, *De ordine creaturarum* 11.2 (PL 83, 942).

131 *Nostri codices*, i.e., the Vulgate text. But see n. 136 below.

and thirty years, and begot Seth, the old translation has *two hundred and thirty* instead of *a hundred and thirty*. And where in our text this follows,
[5:4] And the days of Adam after he begot Seth were eight hundred years, and he begot sons and daughters, the latter has *seven hundred* for *eight hundred*. But where in the conclusion this is added,
[5:5] And all the time that Adam lived came to nine hundred and thirty years, and he died, in that place the latter also puts the same sum, and the like difference of numbers between each version is maintained in all the generations up to the flood, so that we read that each generation in the Seventy Translators had a hundred years more before the birth of a son than in the Hebrew Truth, and after the birth a hundred years less.[132] Yet in the conclusion each version puts the same number, except in the sixth generation, where in both texts Jared is found to have begot Enoch at the age of a hundred and sixty-two, and to have lived after his birth for eight hundred years;[133] and in the ninth, where according to the Hebrew Truth, in a new kind of difference, Lamech is found to have begot Noah, when he was a hundred and eighty-two years of age, and to have survived after his birth for five hundred and ninety-five years.[134] But in the Seventy Translators a hundred and eighty-eight years are found before the birth of Noah, but after his birth five hundred and sixty-five. Thus it happens that Lamech is found to have lived twenty-four years more in the Hebrew text than in the text of the Seventy Translators. By reason of this difference in translations it turns out that the time of life of Methuselah seems to be prolonged fourteen years beyond the flood;[135] and that the years before the flood are one thousand six hundred and fifty-six according to the Hebrews, but according to the Seventy Translators, whom the chroniclers follow, there are found to be two thousand two hundred and forty-two years – although the very learned Augustine claims that *even in the Septuagint* translation *in fewer, but more*

132 In fact, these balanced discrepancies apply only to generations one through to five (Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel), and seven (Enoch), as Bede's next sentence makes clear.

133 Cf. Gen. 5:18-19.

134 Cf. Gen. 5:28; 5:30.

135 As Augustine states, *DCD* 15.11 (CCSL 48, 467). What Bede omits to say is that the Septuagint gives Methuselah's age at the birth of Lamech as 167. Hence, adding the ages of the patriarchs (in the Septuagint reckoning) at the birth of their first-born sons to the age of Noah at the flood (Adam, 230 + Seth, 205 + Enosh, 190 + Kenan, 170 + Mahalalel, 165 + Jared, 162 + Enoch, 165 + Methuselah, 167 + Lamech, 188 + Noah, 600), we get a total of 2242 years. Methuselah is said to have lived 969 years, which, added to the ages of the patriarchs as above, gives a total of 2256 years or 14 years after the flood.

reliable, manuscripts[136] *Methuselah is found to have died six years before the flood*.[137] When with the utmost diligence he sought for the cause **/95/** of the aforesaid contradiction between the translations, not wishing to detract from the credibility of the Seventy Translators, whom both the apostles and the evangelists demonstrably followed in many places (and he himself believed that to translate the Scriptures they made use of a prophetic gift rather than the routine practice of interpretation), he concluded by saying: *One might more plausibly claim, therefore, that when these first began to be transcribed in Ptolemy's library, some such contradiction might have occurred in one manuscript. But if it were copied thereafter for the first time, it might be disseminated far and wide from there, when a mere scribal error was involved. It is not unreasonable to suppose this in regard to the problem of the lifetime of Methuselah.*[138] And a bit further on he says: *When some discrepancy is found in the two versions, since both cannot be true to the facts, I have no doubt at all that the proper course is to put credence in that language from which the translation was made into another by the translators*.[139] And therefore according to the Hebrew Truth, *Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begot … Seth* [5:3].

[5:6] Seth lived a hundred and five years and begot Enosh.

[5:9] Enosh lived ninety years and begot Kenan.

[5:12] Kenan lived seventy years and begot Mahalalel.

[5:15] Mahalalel lived sixty-five years and begot Jared.

[5:18] Jared lived a hundred and sixty-two years and begot Enoch.

[5:21-22] And Enoch lived sixty-five years and begot Methuselah. And he walked with God after he begot Methuselah three hundred years, and he begot sons and daughters. *He walked with God* means in effect: he followed the will and commandments of God in everything; with God tarrying in him and possessing and ruling his heart, he practised good works abroad, according to that word of the Prophet: *I will show you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Verily to do judgement and to*

136 Here Augustine seems to use *codices* to refer to manuscripts. See n. 131 above, where possibly Bede refers to manuscripts also.

137 Augustine, *Quaestiones* 1.2 (CCSL 33, 2); cf. Augustine, *DCD* 15.13 (CCSL 48, 472). That is, in the manuscripts of the Septuagint that Augustine cites here, the age of Methuselah at the birth of Lamech is given as 187 (as in the Vulgate) and the total number of years to the flood is 2262, which is six years after the death of Methuselah.

138 Augustine, *DCD* 15.13 (CCSL 48, 471).

139 Augustine, *DCD* 15.13 (CCSL 48, 472). Bede repeats Augustine's argument at somewhat greater length in his *Epistola ad Pleguinam* 10.

love mercy and to walk solicitous with your God.[140] And as Zechariah says, *I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk in his name, says the Lord*.[141] But it does not mean that after the birth of Methuselah Enoch walked with God for three hundred years, as if he had not also submitted to divine commands before his birth; but rather it is simply indicated by this expression that he served God **/96/** with good deeds in this life for not more than three hundred years after Methuselah's birth, and that furthermore at the end of this time, he followed his guidance to the joys of the life beyond. For this follows:

[5:23-24] And all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And he walked with God, and was seen no more, because God took him. It is said very beautifully that the one who walked previously in this life with God by obeying his commandments, walked afterwards with him by passing from this life into the other, where he would live in the greatest peace and happiness of flesh and spirit. But the religious doctrine of the universal Church holds that before the day of Judgement, that is, at the imminent advent of the Antichrist, he will return with Elijah[142] for the conversion of this age, insofar as the hearts of mankind may be instructed and strengthened to endure and overcome the persecution of that son of perdition by the authority and teaching of such great men, and then, after the accomplishment of their martyrdom, they will mount to the joys of immortal life, in accordance with what the Lord says in the Apocalypse of John: *And I will give unto my two* martyrs, that is, *witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred sixty days, clothed in sackcloth*,[143] that is, for three and a half years, living in great abstemiousness and distress. And a little further on: *And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that will ascend out of the abyss shall make war against them, and shall overcome them and kill them*.[144] Moreover, I have said above[145] by way of anticipation that just as Lamech, who was cursed in the seventh generation from Adam, signifies the destruction of the wicked, which falls upon them in the future age, when they ought to have hoped for eternal rest, so Enoch, who was translated from the world in the seventh generation, signifies the true rest of the chosen ones, which after the labours of

140 Micah 6:8.
141 Zech. 10:12.
142 Cf. Malach. 4:5.
143 Rev. 11:3.
144 Rev. 11:7.
145 *In Gen.* 2.610-43 (above, pp. 158–59).

this life those who pass away in the six ages receive eternally.[146] Hence Lamech is rightly taught to have taken two wives in violation of the decree of the one who said, *they shall be two in one flesh*,[147] and to have begot from them offspring devoted to the deeds and enticements of the world, and thus, having committed murder, to have been cursed by the sentence of his own mouth.[148] Then Enoch is said to have walked with God. What greater praise of a man could there be? None: because **/97/** he is an inseparable companion, he follows the tracks of the divine commandment in all his actions. If Adam had done this and had never averted his foot from the companionship of the Creator for the sake of hearing the talk of the serpent, he would remain up to this time with all his descendants in paradise. The fact that all the days of Enoch are said to be three hundred and sixty-five years, in which number of days the solar year is brought to an end, signifies mystically by the whole period of this age that those who faithfully serve the Lord and strive toward eternal rest will never fail. And not without reason are the three hundred years during which Enoch is specifically said to have walked with God taken separately. For this number is usually represented among the Greeks by the letter T, and the letter T contains a symbol [*figuram*] of the cross;[149] and if it had only received the upstroke which is lacking in the centre, it would not in that case have depicted a symbol of the cross, but the sign [*signum*] of the cross itself in plain view.[150] Therefore, Enoch, which is to say, 'dedication', walked with God for three hundred years, because truly he portrayed, or better yet he performed, the life and discipline of those who in the faith of the Lord's passion await the joy of eternal salvation, denying themselves, and bearing their cross daily, and following the Lord, or, to put it another way, walking with the Lord and directing their course toward the entrance to paradise.

Moreover, it should be observed that although Scripture constructs the line of descent from Seth to Noah, and then to Abraham, with such great exactness, it describes the offspring of Cain as far as Lamech and his children without any mention of their ages, as if impressing upon us by its

146 Cf. *DST* 2.12.254-57 (CCSL 123A, 167).

147 Gen. 2:24.

148 Cf. Gen. 4:23-24.

149 Cf. Augustine, *Quaestiones* 7.37 (CCSL 33, 350–51).

150 Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes* 67.23/24.32 (CCSL 39, 892): *In quo numero crucis signum est propter τ litteram, quae in graecis numerorum notis trecentos significat*. For Bede's distinction between *figura* and *signum*, see Introduction, p. pp. 13–14, and Kendall, 'The Responsibility of *Auctoritas*', pp. 111–13.

silence that word of the Psalmist, *For the Lord knows the way of the just, and the way of the wicked shall perish*.[151]

[5:25] And Methuselah lived a hundred and eighty-seven years and begot Lamech.

[5:28-29] And Lamech lived a hundred and eighty-two years and begot … Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us from the works and labours of our hands on the earth, which the Lord has cursed. Lamech foresaw through the spirit of prophecy what kind of person his son was, that he would be a man of great virtue, and that in his days the race of the wicked would be exterminated, and that through him, after the flood, the race of the faithful would be restored. And I believe that he intended the works and labours **/98/** of the hands, of which he spoke, to be understood as none other than those ancestors by whom the line of the elect was concealed at that time from the depravity of the wicked. But he spoke of his own comfort and that of his children when he predicted that a new race of the just would be born after the destruction of the world as it then was by the flood, when all the powers and inhabitants of the world had been done away with and the face of the age was renewed. For now also it is a comfort to the good, when they see in the spreading disasters of the world the day of Judgement approaching, at which time, after the community of the depraved has been destroyed, they themselves may possess a new kingdom of the age to come with the Lord.

Where our edition has 'shall comfort', however, the old translators said, *This same shall make us rest from our works*, which seems more suited to the name of Noah.[152] Noah indeed means 'rest', by which it can be understood literally that in his days all the works of men were laid to rest again by the flood. But according to the spiritual sense, it is the same rest which is also the comfort of the saints, namely to observe, as the end of the world approaches, that both the destruction of the wicked and the time of their own rewards is at hand. Moreover, it is proper that Noah, through whose merits devoted to the Lord rest and comfort was to be given to the world, is born in the tenth generation from Adam, because truly by the perfection of the ten commandments of the Law eternal rest and life is given to us. When it said that he begot, Scripture properly would not name one son of

151 Ps. 1:6.

152 Cf. Isidore, *Etym*. 7.6.15: *Noe requies interpretatur, pro eo quod sub illo omnia retro opera quieuerunt per diluuium. Vnde et pater eius uocans nomen eius Noe dixit: 'Iste requiescere nos facit ab omnibus operibus nostris'*.

his alone,[153] lest in the perfect man[154] the number eleven, which is as it were the transgression of the number ten, should seem to have some standing.[155] But speaking mystically as of a man of virtue, it reports that three sons were born to him equally.[156]

[5:31b] And Noah, it says, **when he was five hundred years old, begot Shem and Ham and Japheth**. Therefore Noah was born in the tenth generation, because he prefigured and carried out the life of those who are perfected through the observance of the ten commandments. He begot three sons, in order to signify that he served the Lord in the faith of the holy Trinity and produced the fruit of spiritual virtues by the fruit of carnal offspring. Even on the level of historical allegory[157] it was fitting that he, in whom the seed of the age that was to be born again was to be left to the dying world, **/99/** fathered three sons, in order that by their offspring the three parts of the world might be filled. For the sons of Shem took possession chiefly of Asia, the sons of Ham, of Africa, and the sons of Japheth, of Europe.[158]

[6:1-2] And after that men began to be multiplied upon the earth and daughters were born to them. The sons of God seeing their daughters, that they were fair, took to themselves wives of all which they chose. 'Men' refers to the offspring of Cain, who, having turned aside from regard for the divine will, had subjugated their minds entirely to human affairs. But 'sons of God' refers to those who were born of the race of Seth, and who, by the example of their forefather's devotion, maintained the service that they owed to God with pure hearts. In the Gospel, the Lord set his disciples apart from the conclusion[159] reached by others by means of this distinction,

153 Noah's three sons are first mentioned in Gen. 5:31. It is customary in the genealogies in Genesis for the first-born son to be named, followed by a separate statement that the patriarch begot sons and daughters. But in Noah's case, he is said to have begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

154 Noah is called 'a just and perfect man' in Gen. 6:9.

155 Cf. *In Gen.* 2.604-06 (above, p. 158).

156 Cf. Augustine, *DCD* 15.10. Bede is summarizing Augustine's rather convoluted argument. Augustine reports that the law is symbolized by the number ten, and that therefore the number eleven symbolizes its transgression. There are ten generations from Adam to Noah. Noah had three sons, two good and one bad. If you add the number of the good sons to the number of generations, you get twelve, which is the number of the patriarchs and the apostles. Bede shifts the focus of the latter part of Augustine's argument to the significance of the number three.

157 *Iuxta historiam*, i.e., literal allegory. See Introduction, pp. 10–11.

158 Cf. Isidore, *Etym*. 7.6.16-18 and 9.2. The succinct formulation that assigns Asia to Shem, Africa to Ham, and Europe to Japheth originates with Bede. See Introduction, pp. 23–24.

159 Bede uses *comparatio* in the technical rhetorical sense of coming to a conclusion based on the comparison of competing claims of evidence.

when he asked, *Whom do men say that the Son of man is?*[160] And, having received their response, he asks, *But whom do you say that I am?*[161] Clearly he wished them to be understood as being more eminent than other men, and to be reckoned in the number of those of whom he himself says, *I have said, You are gods and all of you the sons of the most High*.[162] Some texts of the Bible[163] have 'angels of God' in place of 'sons of God', which certainly is understood in the same sense. 'Angels of God' is, of course, the name that is rightly given to just men, who try to live an angelic life on earth according to the measure of their capacity. To such the Apostle says, *But you are not brothers in the flesh, but in the spirit*,[164] and again, *But our conversation is in heaven*.[165] It seems, therefore, that as long as the offspring of the race of Seth were not commingled with the offspring of Cain, they preserved the standard of their chastity unimpaired. But after slipping into lust they united themselves to the cursed offspring of wicked women, and then, when the grace of their chaste minds had been corrupted, they began to be sharers of his curse. Finally, in the Mosaic law it is carefully and zealously enjoined upon the children of Israel that they not mix in marriage with foreigners, *lest*, it says, *his daughter turn away your son, and they follow their gods*.[166]

[6:3] And God said, My spirit shall not remain in /100/ man forever, because he is flesh, and his days shall be a hundred and twenty years. St Jerome says in explanation of these verses: *In Hebrew it is written, 'My spirit will not judge these men forever, because they are flesh'. That is, because man's nature is weak, I will not reserve them for eternal torments, but I will restore to them here what they deserve. Therefore, it expresses not the severity, as it reads in our texts, but the clemency of God, while the sinner is punished here for his sin. Hence also God speaks angrily to some, 'I will not punish their daughters when they shall commit fornication, and their spouses when they shall commit adultery',*[167] *and in another place, 'I will*

160 Matt. 16:13.

161 Matt. 16:15.

162 Ps. 81:6 (82:6).

163 Bede uses the phrase *quidam codices* here and below for the Old-Latin text of the Bible, as quoted, for example, by Augustine, *DCD* 15.23 (CCSL 48, 490). The phrase contrasts with *nostri codices*, 'our text' or the Vulgate.

164 Rom. 8:9.

165 Philipp. 3:20.

166 Deut. 7:4. Jones ('Bede's Commentary on Genesis', p. 130, n. 43) states: 'Bede evidently borrowed this passage, for he quoted Deuteronomy *antiqua versione*; but I have not traced the source'.

167 Hosea 4:14, from Jerome.

punish their iniquities with a rod and their sins with stripes. But my mercy I will not take away from them'.[168] *Then, in order not to seem cruel, in that he had not given the opportunity of repentance to sinners, he added, 'And his days shall be a hundred and twenty years'. That is, they will have a hundred and twenty years to do penance … But since they scorned to do penance, God did not wish to wait for the time which was decreed, but, having cut off the space of twenty years, he brought on the flood in the hundredth year appointed for penance.*[169]

[6:4a] Now giants were upon the earth in those days. 'Giants' means men brought forth into the world with immense bodies and endowed with exceeding power. We read that there were many of this kind even after the flood, that is, in the times of Moses and David, who take their name in Greek from the fact that according to the fables of the poets the earth begot[170] them. And they seem to have been the offspring at that time, after the descendants of Seth had chosen wives for themselves from the race of Cain on account of their beauty contrary to the natural law of their own dignity; for the verse goes on:

[6:4b/c] For after the sons of God went in to the daughters of men, and they brought forth children, these are the mighty men of old, men of renown. But it should be noted that in this passage in place of 'giants', *it reads in Hebrew 'fallen ones',* that *is, annasilim*;[171] and the sense is suitable and perfect, because there were **/101/** fallen men on earth in those days, that is, men clinging to earthly desires, who had lost the condition of righteousness devoted to God. For in their language, giants are properly called *Rephaim*.[172] But 'giant' is also sometimes used in a good sense, as it is in this saying about the Lord: *he has rejoiced as a giant to run the way*.[173] This stands for the unique power by which he justly transcended the rest of the human race and accomplished the ordained mystery of Incarnation with his wondrous virtue, just as 'lion' also sometimes signifies the Lord, and sometimes the devil.[174] But it signifies the devil on account of its pride and

168 Ps. 88:33-34 (89:32-33), from Jerome.

169 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 6.3 (CCSL 72, 9).

170 *Genuerit*, from *gigno*. That is, Bede, following Isidore, *Etym*. 11.3.13, derives *gigantes* from the verb *gigno* (Greek, *gignomai*), *genui*, which is said to be related to Greek, *ge*, earth.

171 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 6.4 (CCSL 72, 10); *Annaphilim* [= *Nephilim*], Jerome.

172 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 70).

173 Ps. 18:6 (19:5).

174 The medieval interpretative doctrine of *sensus in bono et malo* lies behind this sentence. See Introduction, p. 18.

ferocity, and the Lord on account of its power (although in the Hebrew Truth the aforementioned verse of the Psalm is written this way, *he has rejoiced as a powerful one to run the way*).

[6:5-6a] And God seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and that all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil, it repented him that he had made man on the earth. It says that God repented – not that God really *repents, like man, of any deed of his, whose purpose with respect to all things is as entirely fixed as his foreknowledge is certain; but Scripture uses such words* to *insinuate itself, so to speak, more intimately*[175] into us, who are not accustomed to alter any undertaking and change it into something else except by repenting. Therefore, although to those observing with a pure heart divine providence proves to administer all things in an absolutely fixed order, nevertheless Scripture is suited to, and adapts itself to the lowly intelligence of duller persons, the multitude of whom is far greater, so that it may say that those things which are begun and do not go on as much as they are expected to are set aside as if by the repentance of God. Similar to this is what follows:

[6:6b-7] And being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, he said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, from man even to beasts, from the creeping thing even to the birds of heaven, for it repents me that I have made them. For God is said to feel sorrow in a human manner when he observes that the men whom he himself created adhere to the wicked enemy by sinning rather than to himself by living piously, according to that saying of Solomon, *And a foolish son is the sorrow of his father*.[176] And again, *A foolish son is the anger of his father, and the sorrow of the mother that bore him*.[177] *When Scripture goes on to announce the destruction of all living things* **/102/** *on earth and in the air, it is proclaiming the magnitude of the coming disaster, not threatening the destruction of irrational creatures as if they too had sinned*.[178]

[6:9] These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a just and perfect man in his generations. He walked with God. Noah is praised with the same praise as Enoch, namely that he followed the tracks of the divine commandment with the upright steps of good works, and for that reason, when the world was about to perish, the latter was translated into paradise,

175 Augustine, *DCD* 15.25 (CCSL 48, 493); cf. also Augustine, *DCD* 14.11 (CCSL 48, 431).

176 Proverbs 19:13.

177 Proverbs 17:25.

178 Augustine, *DCD* 15.25 (CCSL 48, 493).

and when the world was perishing, the former was saved in the ark. And Noah was *just and perfect*, not as the saints are to be perfected in that immortality by which they will be made equal to the angels of God, but as they are able to be perfect in this exile on earth. And for that reason, *in his generations* is added, in order to signify that he *was just, not in accordance with perfect justice, but with respect to the justice of his generations*,[179] of those generations namely in which Seth, Enosh, Enoch, and other men of that period were holy and perfect. The text of Holy Scripture that follows reveals that his sons Shem and Japheth also belong to these generations.[180]

[6:12] And when God had seen that the earth was corrupted (for all flesh had corrupted its way). *All flesh* means 'all mankind', as it does in this saying of the Prophet, *And all flesh shall see the salvation of God*.[181] For neither birds nor four-footed animals had corrupted their way by sinning, just as it is not they, but all mankind that will see *the salvation of God*, that is, Christ.

[6:13-14a] He said to Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me, the earth is filled with iniquity through them, and I will destroy them with the earth. Make an ark of timber planed smooth, and so forth. A multiform mystical allegory is contained in the building of the ark and the sudden coming of the flood. First of all, just as the Lord himself declared, the unexpected hour of Last Judgement is signified by the sudden inundation of the flood: *And as it came to pass*, he says, *in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat and drink, they married wives and were given in marriage, until the day that* **/103/** *Noah entered into the ark. And the flood came and destroyed them all*.[182] And indeed the construction of the ark, which went on for a hundred years,[183] signifies the whole time of this age in which the holy Church is built and brought to its perfect end. For no one doubts that the number one hundred signifies perfection, either because it is made up of ten decades, or because it passes

179 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 6.9 (CCSL 72, 10).

180 Gen. 6:10–10:32.

181 Luke 3:6. Luke (3:4-6) is quoting the 'Prophet' Isaiah (40:3-5), but in 3:6 Luke departs from the text of Isaiah.

182 Luke 17:26-27.

183 This seems to be an inference from the statement that Noah was five hundred years old when his sons were born (Gen. 5:31) coupled with the second statement that they were born (Gen. 6:10), which is immediately followed by the account of God's anger that leads to the flood (Gen. 6:11ff.).

from the left hand to the right hand,[184] as if expressing that process,[185] which is carried out in this life indeed as if in the left hand, but which will be ended in the life to come as if in the right hand. And just as, after the ark was made and all those creatures that were to be saved were brought into it, the flood came and carried off all those that were outside it, so when all the people who have been predestined for eternal life have entered the Church, the end of the world will come, and all the people who are found outside the Church will perish. And in this sense, the ark plainly signifies the Church, Noah signifies the Lord who builds the Church in his saints, and the flood signifies the end of the world or Last Judgement.

But, apart from the building of the ark, even in that name Noah, since it means 'rest', and the Lord will give rest to men and comfort them, it was foretold that men would rest from the works and labours of their hands. In the earth which the Lord condemned, the name contains the allegory of the Lord Saviour. For he comforts us by the splendour of his Spirit, who is called on that account the Paraclete, that is, 'the comforter'.[186] He who was condemned for our sake rescued us from the condemnation of the Law. He calls the labourers to rest, saying, *Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls*.[187] Truly, he alone in all things *was a just and perfect man in the generations*, that is, in the whole congregation of saints, inasmuch as he did not do sin, and deceit was not found in his mouth.

But according to another interpretation, equally pious and catholic, the ark signifies the Church, and the flood signifies the water of baptism, by which the Church itself is washed clean in all its members and **/104/** sanctified, as the apostle Peter explains: *when the patience of God waited in the days of Noah, when the ark was a building, wherein a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. Whereunto baptism being of the like form, now*

184 This refers to the system of finger calculation that Bede describes in *DTR* 1 (*BOT*, pp. 179–81). The numbers up to one hundred were made on the left hand; higher numbers were made on the right. The number one hundred was made on the right hand like the number ten on the left (the sign for ten is made by fixing the nail of the index finger of the left hand to the middle joint of the thumb of the left hand); the number two hundred on the right hand like the number twenty on the left; etc.

185 'That process' [*illam actionem*] evidently refers to the building and ultimate completion of the Church in this age (= the left hand) and its abolition (because its purpose has been accomplished) in the next (= the right hand).

186 E.g., John 14:26; 15:26; etc.

187 Matt. 11:28-29.

saves you also: not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the examination of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.[188] In saying that we were saved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he explains in brief what the number of the eight souls that had been made safe by water means mystically. For the day of the Lord's resurrection is indeed the third from the day of his passion, but it is the eighth from the first day of creation.[189] Also, several of the fathers often interpret the waves of the flood in connection with the temptations of this age, by which the holy Church is daily assaulted but not overcome. Instead, having itself been strengthened by temptations, it is raised all the higher from earthly desires to the heavenly things that ought to be sought. But whatever is outside of the Church is slain by these same worldly temptations; just as it is said that the greatly increased and violently flooding waters on the surface of the earth elevated the ark to the heights above it, but whatever was outside the ark perished. This interpretation is supported by the Lord's parable of the two houses, the one built upon a rock, the other on sand.[190] When they had alike been beaten by the rain, the winds, and the floods, the one which had been founded upon the rock of faith was proved good by temptations, but the one which had placed its hope in the fleeting delights of this life, as if on the sands, was destroyed. For what the builder Noah represents in the ark is represented in the house of faith by its foundation, the rock; and what the mind, corrupt and inclined to the earth, of the giants outside the ark represents is represented in the house of unbelief by the heaped up sand. Therefore the ark may signify the Church, and the flood may signify the font of baptism by which it is washed clean, or it may signify the waves of the tempting world by which it is tested, or it may signify the end in which it is crowned.

Furthermore, Noah, the builder of the ark, allegorically represents either our Lord and Saviour himself or any devout ruler of this same holy Church. '*Make an ark of timber planed smooth*', God says. Not only the men who were saved in the ark, **/105/** but also the animals which entered it at the same time, and even the timbers of which it was made signify mystically

188 1 Peter 3:20-21.

189 In both cases, counting inclusively. That is, Christ was crucified on a Friday and resurrected on a Sunday, and the first day of creation was a Sunday. Obviously, Bede does not literally mean that the resurrection occurred on the eighth day after first creation. Cf. Augustine, *CF* 12.15 (CSEL 25, 345). For a fuller allegorical explanation of the octave from creation to resurrection, see *In Gen.* 1.999-1004, and n. 127 (above, p. 97). Left unstated is the fact that the number eight was routinely interpreted as signifying baptism.

190 Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:48-49.

the faithful of the holy Church. Therefore, the timbers of which it was made are commanded to be 'planed smooth', because everyone is laid down in the construction of the Church by coming to the faith. Having first been torn from the root of the old way of life by the knowledge and correction of those who have gone before in Christ, he must dig out everything that he discovers in himself of culpable wrongdoing and degradation, and adjust himself in all his thought and conduct to the rule of catholic faith and truth, in order that the new man who is to be created can be fittingly laid in place in the layout of the heavenly building in his own place and time.

In place of 'timber planed smooth', however, the old translation put 'squared timbers', which equally relates to the same perfecting of the elect. *For* which*ever way you turn a square object, it will be stable*,[191] and it cannot be subject to any chance overturn. So truly, the mind of the elect, whatever temptations may occur to it, is thus sure to preserve inviolable the state of its faithful purpose.

[6:14b] You shall make little rooms in the ark. The different rooms in the ark were arranged as cages for the different animals which were to enter it. And in the Church there are many systems of practice on account of the diversity of those who come to the faith. For there ought not to be one and the same way of life for married people and ascetics, or for sinners and the righteous. And to the former it is said, *If you will enter into life, keep the commandments … you shall do no murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness*,[192] and other commandments of this kind; but to the latter it is said, *If you will be perfect, go, sell all that you have, and give to the poor*.[193] Hence, the Lord also says of the reward of eternal recompense, *In my Father's house there are many rooms*.[194] Therefore, there are little rooms in the ark, because everyone does not have one reward in the Church, nor does everyone experience the same progress in the faith, although all are contained within the one faith and are washed clean by the same baptism.

[6:14c-15a] And you shall smear it with pitch within and without. And thus you shall make it. *Pitch is a very hot and strong* **/106/** *glue*,[195] the power of which is this, that timbers which have been smeared with it can

191 Augustine, *DCD* 15.26 (CCSL 48, 494); cf. Bede, *In Sam.* 3.1353-54 (CCSL 119, 168–69); *In Ezram* 1.1304 (CCSL 119A, 273); *De templo* 1.304-05 (CCSL 119A, 154).

192 Matt. 19:17-18.

193 Matt. 19:21.

194 John 14:2.

195 Isidore, *Quaestiones* 7.4 (PL 83, 230).

not be devoured by worms, nor can they be destroyed by the heat of the sun or the blasts of the winds or the inundation of waters. Hence, what can be meant mystically by pitch other than constancy of faith? And the ark is smeared with pitch within and without, and thus the whole is made perfect, just as both the thoughts and deeds of the elect, in order not to be conquered or beguiled by the assaults of vices, are fortified by the strength of faith in all things.

[6:15b/d] The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. The length of the ark signifies the long-suffering of patience, by which misfortunes are bravely endured. The breadth signifies the extent of charity, by which even those who inflict misfortunes are embraced. The height makes known the loftiness of hope, by which eternal recompense in heaven is awaited. Hence, the length of the ark is justly commanded to be three hundred cubits,[196] the number which, as I have noted above,[197] is represented in Greek by the letter T. This letter is written in the shape of a cross, because as long as the holy Church endures unconquered and steady among misfortunes, it certainly follows the footsteps of the Lord's passion, mindful of what he said, *And he that does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me*.[198] The breadth extends for fifty cubits, in which number is represented the Holy Spirit;[199] and in the Law universal rest and forgiveness of sins is given to the people of God, because the love of God is diffused in our hearts, not from the merit of our deeds, but by the Holy Spirit, which is given to us. And *this is rest*[200] and in this the forgiveness of our sins, when we love God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our strength, and our neighbour in God as ourselves, but our enemy on account of God.[201] The height is thirty cubits, because clearly this is the sole and only hope of the elect that they may ascend to the contemplation of the holy Trinity by the observance of the Ten Commandments of the Law, which are brought to perfection through the love of God and one's neighbour. For three tens make **/107/** thirty.

But there is another remarkable mystery in the shape of the ark, in that

196 A cubit is the length from the elbow to the tip of the fingers, or approximately 18 inches: thus, the length of the ark would be somewhere around 450 feet.

197 *In Gen.* 2.867-68 (above, p. 166).

198 Matt. 10:38.

199 Cf. Isidore, *Quaestiones* 1.7.6 (PL 83, 230). Augustine remarks (*De doctrina Christiana* 2.16.25) that the number 50 is sacred because of its association with Pentecost, the feast on which the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles (Acts 2:1-4).

200 Isa. 28:12.

201 Cf. Matt. 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27.

it is shown to have been formed according to the proportions of the human body. *Indeed, the length of the human body from head to foot is exactly six times the width from one side to the other, and exactly ten times the thickness measured along the side from the back to the belly. So, if you measure a man lying on his back or face down, he is exactly six times longer from his head to his foot than his side from right to left or from left to right, and ten times longer than his thickness from the ground. For this reason the ark was made three hundred cubits in length, and fifty in breadth, and thirty in height*.[202]

And because the Apostle says of the Church that there is *one body and one Spirit* in Christ,[203] the ark, which exhibited its shape, was rightly formed in the likeness of the human body, since Christ himself, our Lord and God, willed to be made human for us, and to wash us from our sins and consecrate us by the sacraments of his Incarnation. Rightly, he ordained beforehand that the ark, in which he determined to save the remnants of the human race when the wicked were being destroyed, was to be made in the fashion of the human body, just as the temple that Solomon made to the Lord prefigured not only his Church but also his very flesh, which he took from the Virgin, according to his own testimony, when he said to the Jews, *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*.[204] But he said this, says the Evangelist, *about the temple of his body*.[205] And so the ark, which Noah made in the shape of a human body, contained not only the type of us, of whom the Apostle said, *Until we all meet … unto a perfect man*,[206] but also of the Lord himself, who deigned to gather us into the unity of faith by the mystery of his Incarnation and to wash us from sins by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which was signified by the dove bearing the olive branch back to the ark,[207] and to illuminate and save us from the ruin of the world being destroyed.

[6:16a] You shall make a window in the ark and in a cubit you shall finish the top of it. The Lord ordered a window to be made in the ark, so that later, when the rains stopped and the ark came to rest,[208] Noah could send forth a bird through it to discover *if the waters had now ceased*,[209] and if the earth had dried up or put forth shoots, and also so that he himself, when

202 Augustine, *DCD* 15.26 (CCSL 48, 493).
203 Eph. 4:4.
204 John 2:19.
205 John 2:21.
206 Eph. 4:13.
207 Cf. Gen. 8:10-11.
208 Cf. Gen. 8:2-4.
209 Gen. 8:8.

the window was open, might see the light of the sky. **/108/** Hence, it is said that *in the Hebrew text 'skylight'*[210] is found in place of 'window', because windows are usually lighted more brightly by the noonday sun.[211] This also applies very aptly to the spiritual mysteries, for the window, which did not illuminate the inhabitants of the ark with the splendour of the noonday sun until after the flood was over, implies the knowledge of the divine mysteries, which are revealed more fully to the baptized faithful.

But that the top of the ark is said to have been finished *in a cubit* seems to be because it had three hundred cubits of length and fifty of width at the bottom; but with the corners drawn little by little into a narrow space, it was contracted into the space of one cubit at the very top, clearly having been made shorter and narrower in proportion as it was made higher. And indeed, as far as the constraints of the rains and the flood are concerned, no more suitable form could have been given to the ark, in order that the torrents of rain might be shed from the narrow peak of the roof, when, as the floodgates of the sky opened up, it poured for so long a time. But this form of the ark is also mystically suited to the condition of the holy Church. For just as the ark was broader in the lower parts, where it is thought to have held the animals, it was narrower in the upper parts where it contained the men and the birds, until it reached the measure of one cubit at the top, so the Church has in it more unspiritual than spiritual persons; it has more who, in the manner of four-footed animals, are inclined to lust for earthly things with the whole intent of their mind, than those who seek heavenly things on the wings of the virtues. And the holier those in it are, the fewer of them are found, until it comes to the *mediator of God and men*[212] himself, who appeared as a man among men so as to be blessed as God above all things forever.

[6:16b] And the door of the ark you shall set lower down[213] in the side. This door, through which entered both the humans and all the animals who were to be saved in the ark, signifies the very unity of faith, without which no one can enter the Church (for there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism). One God, because the door is appropriately ordered to be placed in the side

210 *Meridianum* is used here (from Jerome) to refer to a window open to the noonday sun [*meridianus sol*], i.e., a skylight (see Gen. 6:16, trans. Alter, Speiser).

211 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 6.16 (CCSL 72, 10).

212 1 Tim. 2:5.

213 The Douay-Rheims translators take *deorsum* ('lower down') with the following rather than the preceding clause: 'and the door of the ark thou shalt set in the side: with *lower*, middle chambers …'. Speiser (p. 47) translates the Hebrew as, 'Put the entrance in the side of the ark, which is to be made with lower, second, and third decks'; similarly, Alter, p. 41. However, the *per cola et commata* layout in Weber/Gryson agrees with Bede.

of the ark, since without doubt it signifies that door which the soldier's spear opened in the side of the Lord Saviour when he was placed on the cross, from which *immediately there came out blood and water*.[214] By these sacraments each of the faithful individually is received **/109/** into the fellowship of the holy Church as if into the interior of the ark. And not only is the door of the ark commanded to be made in the side, but also lower down, in order to signify the humility, either of the Lord himself by which he died for us, or our own, without which we cannot be saved. Likewise, the door of the ark was made lower down and next to the earth, so that the men and animals that were to be saved might enter there, and, having entered, might then ascend to the upper parts each into his own seat, because the Lord, appearing in the depths of this mortal nature, was wounded for our iniquities in order to lead us, who have been released by the sacraments of his wounds to the upper rooms of the virtues in the present life, by an invisible stairway to supernal rewards in heaven.

It also rightly signifies that door in the temple of Solomon, by which there was an ascent to the upper parts.[215] About this it is written, *And the door for the middle side was on the right hand of the house*.[216] To be sure, some understand this sentence as stating that the temple had an entrance on the south side, which was far from being the case. For if it were supposed to be understood in this way, Scripture could have briefly stated, 'And it had a door facing south' or 'a southern door'. Now in fact the temple itself had its entrance on the east side. And indeed this is what is said, *And the door for the middle side was on the right hand of the house*. The southern part of the house is called the right hand of the house, in the middle of which side was that door through which there was an ascent to the upper parts. The entrance originates in the eastern part of the same side, that is, in the corner itself, and little by little it proceeds to the upper storeys through the hollow interior[217] of the middle wall.[218] Hence it is appropriately added, *and by winding stairs they went up to the middle room, and from the middle to the third*.[219] Since, therefore, when the Lord said to the Jews, *Destroy this temple, and in three*

214 John 19:34.

215 This is an example of a literal or historical allegory (as opposed to a spiritual allegory), since the reference is from one object in the unredeemed world to another. See Introduction, pp. 10–11.

216 1 Kings/3 Kings 6:8.

217 Literally, the intestines [*interanea*].

218 Cf. Bede, *In Ezram* 2.508-25 (CCSL 119A, 300–301); *Homeliae* 2.1.239-66 (CCSL 122, 190–91); *In Reges* 12 (CCSL 119, 304); *De templo* 1.744-84 (CCSL 119A, 165–66).

219 1 Kings/3 Kings 6:8.

days I will raise it up,[220] he was speaking about the temple of his body, does not the door in the right side of this temple plainly reveal that it is the one which was opened in his right side after the passion, as I said above?[221] Through this opening we pass from the present life of the holy Church to the eternal rest of souls in the life to come, in remembrance[222] of those who, after entering the right side of the temple, made their way to the middle room by winding stairs. And moreover, after **/110/** the very blessed rest of our souls, we arrive at the recovery of our spiritual bodies, climbing as it were from the middle storey up to the third, from which time we enjoy the perpetual immortality of both together, that is, of the soul and the body, with God.

[6:16c] Middle storeys [*cenacula*] **and third storeys** [*tristega*][223] **shall you make in it**. *Tristega* signifies a triple storey, for *stege* means 'storey' in Greek.[224] Hence the old translators used *tricamerata* in place of this term. And then in the Acts of the Apostles, where the youth, whom Paul brought back from death, is said to have fallen from the third 'loft' or 'storey',[225] in Greek it is written that he fell from the *tristegum*. But middle storeys and third storeys (or, as the old translators said, *bicamerata* and *tricamerata*) were made in the ark, so that living creatures of unlike kind would remain in various separate places – wild animals, as seems likely, on the lower levels, clean animals on the upper levels, and men and birds on the top levels. For it is a fact that both the raven and the dove, and subsequently other birds also, were there where the man was stationed, and so in the vicinity of the window, which may confidently be supposed to have been made in the topmost regions of the ark, because the man sent forth the aforesaid birds through it to see how the face of the earth was faring. In these storeys different small rooms were also made, as was said above,[226] because of the

220 John 2:19.

221 *In Gen.* 2.1269-74 (above, pp. 178–79).

222 See Introduction, p. 11, on the contrast between *signum* and *exemplum*.

223 Douay-Rheims translates, 'middle chambers and third storeys'. In classical Latin (as Bede knew perfectly well), *cenaculum* meant 'dining-room', or, since dining-rooms were usually on the second floor, 'upper floor'; *tristega* was a Greek borrowing which could be taken to mean either a third floor or a three-chambered storey or a three-storey building. In the Old-Latin version these were referred to as *bicamerata* and *tricamerata*, words apparently coined for this passage in Genesis, which could imply either 'two-chambered storeys' and 'three-chambered storeys' or 'two-storey buildings' and 'three-storey buildings'. Bede seems to accept all interpretations.

224 Cf. Bede, *Retractatio* 20.9 (CCSL 121, 156).

225 Acts 20:9.

226 *In Gen.* 2.1151 (above, p. 175): cf. Gen. 6:14.

difference between those same animals and birds, lest some, being more ferocious, should harm others which were more gentle. And not without reason did Scripture say that middle storeys and third storeys were made in the ark, or that it was made of two storeys and of three storeys, although it could have said in brief that it was laid out with five floors or storeys. But it said that it was made of two storeys to signify that *circumcision and foreskin, the Jews and the Greeks*, were to be saved in the Church.[227] And it said that it was made of three storeys on account of the triple fruit of the gospel seed, thirtyfold, sixtyfold, one hundredfold,[228] so that, for example, married virtue dwells at the bottom, above it, the state of widowhood, and superior to **/111/** this, virginal chastity.[229] Moreover, Origen says that the ark was made of two storeys in the lower parts, so that the lowest part would receive the dung, and the second part would be assigned to storing the fodder; but in the upper parts the ark was made of three storeys, so that the wild animals would have their dens in the first part, the tamer animals, their stalls in the second part, and men, their seat in the highest part.[230]

[6:17-18b] Behold I will bring the waters of a great flood upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. All things that are in the earth shall be consumed. And I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall enter into the ark, you and your sons, and so forth. When the waters of the great flood were brought upon the earth, they destroyed all flesh that was found outside the ark, but Noah and all the creatures that were in the ark were saved. Washing the world, the water of baptism saves whomever it finds remaining faithfully in the unity of the holy Church; but those who receive baptism outside the Church from heretics or schismatics, unless they come again to their senses by returning to catholic unity, perish. Likewise, at the critical moment of Last Judgement, which is approaching, whoever are found persevering in holy Church by faith and deed are saved forever. Those who have been separated from the Church either in faith or deed, or both at once, perish.

[6:21] You shall take unto yourself of all food that may be eaten, and you shall lay it up by you; and it shall be food for you and them. And the Lord filled his Church with the varied nourishment of spiritual life, in order both to attract the crowds of the faithful to a comprehension of the heavenly

227 Augustine, *DCD* 15.26 (CCSL 48, 494).

228 Cf. Matt. 13:8.

229 Cf. Jerome, *Aduersus Iouinianum* 1 (PL 23, 213–14), and *Epistola* 48.2 (PL 23, 495), quoted verbatim in Bede, *DTR* 1 (*BOT*, p. 179), and *In Lucam* 3.437-47 (CCSL 120, 177).

230 Cf. Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim* 2.2.3 (PG 12, 162).

rewards by the universal precepts of his commandments, and to call all those who are made more perfect by the disciplines of a stricter rule to the higher rewards of the same eternal kingdom.[231] But *it is often asked whether the ark, with as much capacity as it is described as having, could have carried all the living creatures which are said to have entered it, with their food. Origen attempts to solve this question by the geometrical cubit, asserting not without reason that Scripture said that Moses was 'instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians',*[232] *a people who loved geometry.* **/112/** *And he says that the geometrical cubit is equal to six of our cubits. Therefore, if we understand such a number of great cubits, there is no question that the ark was of such great capacity that it could hold all of them.*[233] But it should be noted that, although Moses had learned about geometrical cubits, nevertheless he knew that the people for whom he wrote the book were ignorant of these arts, and he did not wish to mislead them by writing things which not they, but only he, along with the most learned of the Egyptians, would understand to be in accordance with reality. Also it should be observed that the same Moses, writing likewise about the construction of the tabernacle, did not specify that he was employing cubits of a different measure than he had used in the ark. For, writing in the same work and for the same readers or listeners, he could not be inconsistent in his usage. But if he was making use of geometrical cubits there as well, then the tabernacle itself was not thirty cubits long[234] and ten cubits high[235] and wide,[236] as we read, but with this number multiplied by six,[237] it was one hundred eighty cubits in length and sixty in height and width. And in that case it was made longer and wider by far than the temple of Solomon, which was only forty cubits in length[238] and twenty cubits in width;[239] and the boards of this tabernacle, which are

231 This is a clear reference to the higher rewards offered by the monastic life.

232 Acts 7:22.

233 Augustine, *Quaestiones* 1.4 (CCSL 33, 3); cf. *DCD* 15.27 (CCSL 48, 495–96).

234 Cf. Exod. 26:15-16; 26:18; 26:20; cf. Bede, *De tabernaculo* 2.817-23 (CCSL 121A, 62–63).

235 Cf. Exod. 26:15-16.

236 Cf. Exod. 26:16; 26:22: this last verse, which says, 'But on the west side of the tabernacle you shall make six boards', would seem to give a width of nine cubits, because each board is said (verse 16) to be a cubit and a half in width. But Bede accepts the explanation of Josephus (*Ant.* 3.6.3), which he quotes verbatim in *De tabernaculo* 2.894-914 (CCSL 119A, 64–65), that the width was ten cubits.

237 For *sescuplicatus*, see Latham, *Word-List*, s.v. *sext/a*.

238 Cf. 1 Kings/3 Kings 6:17.

239 Cf. 1 Kings/3 Kings 6:3.

said to be ten cubits in length and a cubit and a half in width,[240] were sixty cubits in length and nine in width; and they were larger than forests in general usually produce, or than could be suitable for such a building or could easily be carried around by the hands of men. The curtains also, with which it was covered, which are each said to have been thirty cubits in length and four in width,[241] were one hundred and eighty cubits long and twenty-four wide. But that these things should be so understood is also precluded by Josephus, who, writing about the construction of the same tabernacle, says, *And, moreover, the ark* [of the tabernacle] *was made five palms*[242] *in length, and three in width*.[243] In conformity with this, Moses wrote in Exodus that the length of the ark was two and a half cubits, and the width a cubit and a half.[244] On the evidence of Josephus, these are understood to be not geometrical but common cubits. Therefore, concerning the ark of Noah, it should be pondered more deeply **/113/** that all the things that were done in it or in connection with it were full of miracles of divine power. For if the thing were done in the way customary to men, how would eight men have been able give food and drink daily to so great a multitude of birds, pack animals, wild beasts, and creeping things, and to supply other things which need requires, especially since Scripture does not mention that God gave any orders about carrying drink into the ark? How could the dung and urine of so many living creatures not have made the place unbearable by its stench to the animals themselves, and how could it not rot out the bottom of the ark even though it were very well pitched? How is it that, remaining in one spot for a whole year, birds would not lose their power of flight, nor four-footed animals their power of walking? Therefore, it was the Lord himself – he who preserved the ark unimpaired with all those that it carried, and who steered it so that it would not be broken apart in the sea and set it down in so suitable a place in the mountains, where from the door which it had there was an easy and ready egress to the earth for all the living creatures that were contained in it – who provided for these same creatures as well, so that they were fed in the ark and survived in good health. Nor is it, as some declare, pointless to believe that, when the creatures were about to enter the ark, Noah prepared nourishment sufficient for the needs of a single day for each one separately,

240 Cf. Exod. 26:16.

241 Cf. Exod. 26:8.

242 A ‘palm’ is here understood to be equal to half a cubit. If we take a cubit to be roughly eighteen inches, then a palm is roughly nine inches.

243 Josephus, *Ant*. 3.6.5.

244 Cf. Exod. 25:10.

and that each was refreshed by this, in order to signify mystically that we are all refreshed in the Church with the food of life according to the measure of our own capacity, and that from then on they remained, having been quieted and even lulled to sleep by divine command, to the day of their departure.

[6:22-7:1b] And Noah did all things which God commanded him. And the Lord said to him, Go in, you and all your house, to the ark, and so forth. *He did all things which God commanded*, that is, he built the ark, and, after arranging the little rooms, he gathered into it food for all the animals.

[7:2-3] Of all clean beasts take seven, seven, the male and the female. But of the beasts that are unclean two, two, the male and the female. Of the birds also of heaven seven, seven, the male and the female, that seed may be saved upon the face of the whole earth. The fact that God says, *seven, seven*, does not mean that **/114/** he wants twice seven in each of the different species to be brought aboard, but only seven, from which the one that was left over from the pairs could be offered to God after the flood. He says *seven, seven*, on account of the many kinds of animals that were to be included in this number. Likewise, the fact that he says, *two, two*, does not mean twice two in any one species of the unclean beasts, but only two, the male and the female. But he says *two, two*, because these same pairs were to be received in a great many species of animals. In all this it is readily apparent to anyone that if it were done only for the sake of saving the species and not for the sake of a deeper mystery, the lesser number of animals would suffice to ensure the renewal of the stock.[245] But as it is, the unclean beasts enter the ark together with the clean ones, since not all those who undergo the washing of baptism in the Church also observe the cleanliness of good work. And the clean beasts are well represented by the number seven, because the grace of the Spirit is sevenfold, by which the hearts of the faithful are cleansed and sanctified.[246] The unclean beasts are represented by the number two, because false Catholics receive the sacraments of the faith with a two-faced heart, desiring both to take pleasure here with the world and to reign in the future with Christ. Of such as these James says, *Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is inconstant in all his ways*.[247]

[7:5-7] And Noah did all things which the Lord had commanded him. And he was six hundred years old when the waters of the flood overflowed

245 Cf. Augustine, *DCD* 15.27 (CCSL 48, 495).

246 The spirit of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, of fortitude, of knowledge, of godliness, and of the fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:2-3). Cf. Isidore, *Etym.* 7.3.13.

247 James 1:7-8.

the earth. And Noah went in and his sons, his wife, and the wives of his sons with him into the ark, and so forth. The age of Noah signifies the great perfection of those who enter the Church and through faith and work worthy of faith come to eternal joys. For six times a hundred makes six hundred. And the number six, in which the world was made or formed, deservedly signifies the perfection of good work. But the number one hundred, which, as I mentioned above,[248] is transferred from the left to the right hand in finger calculation, is especially suited to those who, standing at the right hand of the Judge at the Last Judgement, are going to hear, *Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom*.[249] And therefore the number one hundred multiplied by six signifies that perfection of the spiritual virtues **/115/** which is not outwardly displayed for the approbation of men, but is accomplished for the glory of the Creator in the hope of divine reward. And the leader of the ark, in which the condition of the Church is expressed, also rightly signifies in the time-span of his life the piety of those who enter it in such a way that they too deserve to pass over to eternal salvation through the merits of their good work. Moreover, it may also correctly be understood in this way, that when the waters of the flood signify the water of baptism, then the age of Noah may imply the perfection toward which those who are baptized ought to strive. But when the waters of the flood prefigure the time of Last Judgement, then that same number of his years may signify figuratively what kind of persons are going to enter with the Lord to eternal rest, which is what the name 'Noah' means,[250] that is, those who are worthy of entrance into heaven by the performance of good work and the striving of a pure heart.

[7:10] And after the seven days were passed, the waters of the flood overflowed the earth. The seventh day indicates the sabbath, that is, the rest, of the life to come. Therefore, in that the flood signifies the water of baptism, it is fitting that it comes seven days after the ark was completed, because we are baptized in the hope of eternal rest.[251] But in that the waters of the flood prefigure the tossings of temptations, then they also come rightly

248 *In Gen.* 2.1069-74 (above, pp. 172–73).

249 Matt. 25:34.

250 *In Gen.* 2.905-06 (above, p. 167).

251 Cf. Augustine, *CF* 12.17 (CSEL 25, 346); Isidore, *Quaestiones* 1.7.15 (PL 83, 232). Augustine (and Isidore, copying him) focuses exclusively on the significance of the number seven. But with subtle changes in Augustine's wording, Bede directs our attention to the fact that the flood is said to have come *after* seven days, that is, on the *eighth* day – eight being the number of baptism and resurrection. This enables him to play with symbolic meanings of seven *and* eight that depend in part on his doctrine of the Seventh and Eighth Ages of the World (cf. *DTR* 71 (CCSL 123B, 542–44). See also *In Gen.* 2.1096-1118 (above, pp. 173–74).

after seven days, because on account of their faith in the hope of future blessedness, the righteous suffer persecutions from those miserable wretches who prefer earthly goods to divine, temporal to eternal. But truly since the flood is likened to the coming of Last Judgement, so also it appropriately inundates the earth after seven days, because then all the elect who have borne *the sweet yoke and light burden* of Christ[252] find rest for their souls.

[7:11-12] In the six hundredth year of the life of Noah, in the second month, in the seventeenth day of the month, all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the flood gates of heaven were opened, and the rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. Among the Hebrews the months are not reckoned from the first to the first [of the Roman month] but rather according to the course of the moon, and their first month, in which Passover was commanded to be held, and in which the world was made, is called Nisan, which we call April. Their second month is Iyar, which we call May,[253] on the seventeenth day of which, that is, when the moon of that **/116/** month was in its seventeenth day, there came the flood, after Noah had entered the ark on that very same day with the people and all the animals and birds that were to be saved by it, for this is what follows:

[7:13-14a] In the selfsame day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth his sons, his wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, went into the ark. They and every beast according to its kind, and so forth until it says,

[7:14e-15a] and all that fly, went in to Noah into the ark. Therefore, all the living creatures entered into the ark on one and the same day, because Noah did not labour long and hard to gather and lead or push them into the ark. But compelled by the divine command, they all came willingly, each in their own rank, and, with Noah taking the lead with his sons and their wives, they followed in regular succession, and one at a time they approached their own little rooms under the guidance of the Lord, as if by their own volition. For what is said of the birds, *they went in to Noah into the ark*, applies to this, and generally what was said above, *and of every thing that moves upon the earth two and two went in to Noah into the ark*.[254] And also on the same day, that is, on the seventeenth day of the second month, the following took place:

[7:16c-17a] And the Lord shut him in on the outside. And the flood was forty days upon the earth. This day was the eighth after the building of

252 Matt. 11:30.

253 Cf. Bede, *DTR* 11 (*BOT*, p. 203) (for Nisan and Iyar).

254 Gen. 7:8-9.

the ark was brought to completion.[255] Accordingly, it is evident that the ark in a great mystery was finished on the tenth day of that second month. For the old first month that came from the Hebrews can fittingly be taken as the people of God, and the second month as the people of the New Covenant. This is why it is commanded in the Law that any who, being *unclean by occasion of a dead man*, or being placed on a journey too far off, or being prevented by any other necessity whatever, could not come to celebrate the Passover [*pascha*] in the first month, should do so in *the second month, on the fourteenth day in the evening*, in the blood of the lamb[256] and with unleavened bread.[257] It is clear that we were signified by the addition of this month, we who with the earlier people of God were unable to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's passion, inasmuch as we were still placed far from the communion of saints, and were unclean, or rather **/117/** dead, with sins.[258] But we came to the faith after these sacraments of the Lord's Incarnation were completed, just as we celebrate Easter [*pascha dominicum*] in the light of the second month. It is clear that the ark was finished on the tenth day of this month because the Lord, appearing in the flesh, promised us the tenpence[259] of the kingdom of heaven.[260] He granted that we, having been given the grace of the Holy Spirit, could perfect the Ten Commandments of the Law. This grace can also be allegorically figured in the number of the seven days during which, after the completion of the ark, the entrance into it and the advent of the flood were awaited; because certainly, having received the promise of the kingdom of God which is expressed by the tenpence, the grace of the Spirit is given to the faithful by which they can be joined to the limbs of the holy Church. And therefore we can rightly understand that the ark was drenched by the flood on the seventeenth day of the month and not before, because it is necessary for each of the faithful first to be instructed individually in the faith for the sake of gaining true rest[261] and the heavenly tenpence,[262] that is, the image of the eternal King, and thus to be allowed to enter into the company of the Church by the washing of rebirth.[263]

255 Here, as above, p. 185 (*In Gen.* 2.1500-03), Bede counts inclusively: that is, the ark is finished on the *first* day.

256 'In the blood of the lamb' is Bede's substitution for 'wild lettuce' [*lactucis agrestibus*] in Num. 9:11.

257 Num. 9:4-6, 10-11.

258 'We' are the Gentiles: that is, 'we' are opposed to 'they', who would be the Jews.

259 *Denarium*, which Douay-Rheims translates as 'penny'.

260 Cf. Matt. 20:1-16.

261 Represented by the number seven.

262 The number ten.

263 I.e., by baptism = the number eight.

Furthermore, in the statement that on account of the flood *all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the flood gates*, that is, the windows, *of heaven were opened*, the phrase 'the great deep' signifies the Scripture of the Old Covenant, which could not open the veins of its spiritual sense to the world during all the long time that it was shut up by the veil of the letter. But, after being unveiled by the Lord, it now itself supplies the most abundant fountains of the knowledge of salvation to the Church. And 'the opened flood gates of heaven' signify the pouring out of evangelical and apostolic preaching, which plainly water earthly hearts from heaven. Therefore, since we are strengthed in the faith of rebirth both by the unveiled words of prophecy and by the preachers of the New Covenant who preach openly, it is rightly said that to make the flood *all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the flood gates of heaven were opened*.[264] And *the Lord shut* the ark *on the outside*, both because he always guards his Church, which rejoices in the washing of holy baptism, with divine protection, so that none of those whom he predestined for eternal life should perish for any reason, and he keeps watch over it everywhere, as it labours amid the tossing waves of the world, so that it cannot be overwhelmed and submerged by the afflictions and delights of the times. For *the Lord directs an angel in a circuit around those fearing him, and shall deliver them*.[265] But also on Judgement Day the Lord **/118/** shuts Noah and the inhabitants of the ark 'in on the outside', when, after placing his elect with him in the house of his Father, he blocks the door of the kingdom of God forever from the entrance of the damned, even if they were penitent too late, in accordance with the parable of the ten virgins in the Gospel, where it says that *they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut*,[266] and so forth.

Moreover, it properly says *that it rained for forty days and forty nights* upon the earth;[267] *for ten multiplied four times makes forty, because every sin of sinners that is included in the ten commandments of the Law, throughout the whole world, which is comprised of four parts, is washed by the sacrament of heavenly baptism, whether the sin, because it pertains to the days, was brought about by the prosperity of things, or by the misfortune of things, because it pertains to the nights*.[268]

264 Gen. 7:11.
265 Ps. 33:8 (34:7).
266 Matt. 25:10.
267 Gen. 7:12.
268 Augustine, *CF* 12.17 (CSEL 25, 346) (somewhat rearranged); cf. Isidore, *Quaestiones* 7.16 (PL 83, 232).

[7:17b-18a] And the waters increased, and lifted up the ark on high from the earth. The waters overflowed exceedingly, and filled all on the face of the earth. And the waters of baptism and faith which have increased throughout the whole world raise up the Church from an appetite for earthly things to the hope and desire for the life of heaven. And likewise the more exceedingly the waves of tribulations frequently beating upon the Church have filled all, the more profoundly they have forced it to seek the joys of the other life. This is well signified in the sacred narrative, when it is said that *the Amorite straitened the children of Dan in the mountain, and gave them not place to go down to the plain*.[269] For Amorite means 'bitter', and Dan means 'judging' or 'judgement'.[270] And who are signified by the children of Dan but those who weigh all their actions carefully in the scales of truth to see that they are proper, and those who, advancing by the lamp of the word of God, swear and determine to guard the judgements of his justice?[271] And who are represented by the Amorite but those who try to disturb or even overthrow the sweetness of the life of the saints by the bitterness of tribulations? And the Amorite straitens the children of Dan in the mountain, and does not allow them to go down to the plain, when so great a storm of persecutions injures the elect so often that they have no time at all to indulge themselves in unworthy thoughts. But the living must in the highest chastity work hard and continuously at prayers and fastings and **/119/** meditations on the Holy Scriptures, so that they may be able to overcome the greater struggles of temptations with a greater exercise of virtues.

[7:18b-19] And the ark was carried upon the waters. And the waters prevailed beyond measure, and all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. The mountains signify all those who are proud and puff themselves up in the glory of this world. Obviously the waters cover these mountains, but the ark is carried upon these same waters, because indeed the turbulent water of temptations overwhelms and submerges the proud and the wicked, but is itself overcome by the just, who do not cease to direct their course to the port of eternal salvation by an unrestricted course of good work and with an eager mind. By this, as by Peter's walking across the sea to the Lord,[272] it is rightly prefigured that the Church will certainly arrive at the tranquillity of heavenly life after treading upon the waters of the

269 Judges 1:34.
270 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 61); Exod. (74).
271 Cf. Ezek. 36:27; Luke 1:6.
272 Cf. Matt. 14:29.

world.[273] Likewise, the waters of the flood bear the ark on high, and cover and hide the mountains, because the sacrament of baptism, by which the Church is raised on high, despises the proud height of this world and shows that it is to be considered worthless. And because we are baptized in the hope of the rest of souls which is to come and of the resurrection of bodies into eternal life, which carnal wisdom is ignorant of, it is rightly added,

[7:20] The water was fifteen cubits higher than the mountains which it covered. *Of course, seven and eight make fifteen*.[274] Seven refers to the rest of souls which is to be after death, because the Lord certainly rested in the grave on the seventh day of the sabbath.[275] And because he arose from the dead after the sabbath, that is, on the eighth day, eight very properly signifies the time of our resurrection. The water, therefore, rose above the high mountains by fifteen cubits, that is, by seven and eight, because the faith of the Church, which is sanctified by the fountain of saving baptism, by means of the hope of future rest and immortality, prevails over all the arrogance of earthly philosophy, which indeed knows how to reason subtly about the creation of the world, but which is unable to say anything about the Creator of the world and about what is above the world in the life of the saints.

[7:24] And the waters prevailed upon the lands a hundred and fifty days. This number refers to the same sacramental meaning as the number fifteen, *because*, since *seventy gets its name from seven and eighty from eight, by the addition of each number* the waters prevailed upon the lands *a hundred and fifty days, commending and confirming*, as I have said, **/120/** *the same* act *of baptism in the dedication of the new man to acquiring faith in rest* and *resurrection*.[276]

[8:1] And the Lord remembered Noah, and all the living creatures and all the cattle which were with him in the ark, and brought a spirit upon the earth, and the waters were abated. The word 'spirit' can be taken to mean God's life-bringer himself, the Spirit, of whom in the beginning it was said, *and the Spirit of God moved over the waters*.[277] About this there is no doubt, because just as then, when the waters were gathered together into one

273 The first part of this paragraph is a tropological interpretation of Gen. 7:18-19. In this sentence, Bede interprets the passage anagogically, and, by implication, typologically. That is, he must have considered the episode of Peter's walking on the water (Matt. 14:29) to be the typological fulfilment of this passage, and both this passage and Matt. 14:29 to be anagogical figures for the ultimate salvation of Christian souls (= the Church) in heaven.

274 Augustine, *CF* 12.19 (CSEL 25, 348).

275 The seventh day of the sabbath = Saturday.

276 Augustine, *CF* 12.19 (CSEL 25, 348).

277 Gen. 1:2.

place, he dried up the earth,[278] so also now, when the waters of the flood were removed from its midst, he uncovered the face of the earth a second time.[279] And this airy wind can also be called by the name of 'spirit', in accordance with the verse of the Psalmist, *He said the word, and there arose the spirit of a storm*,[280] by whose frequent gusts the waters are commonly lowered or moved from their place. And hence is that passage in Exodus: *And when Moses had stretched forth his hand over the sea, the Lord took it away by a strong and burning wind blowing all the night, and turned it into dry ground. And the water was divided*.[281]

[8:2-3] The fountains also of the deep and the flood gates of heaven were shut up, and the rain from heaven was restrained. And the waters returned from off the earth going and coming. And they began to be abated after a hundred and fifty days. The fact that it says that *the waters returned from off the earth going and coming* clearly indicates on the literal level that all the downflows of rivers and streams return to the original deep through the hidden veins of the earth, in conformity with that saying of Solomon, *All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea does not overflow; unto the place from whence the rivers come they return to flow again*.[282] Mystically, however, *after a hundred and fifty days the fountains of the deep and the flood gates of the heaven* are shut up, and with the cessation of the rains the waters return, because, after the words of Holy Scripture have instructed us in the faith and hope of eternal rest and immortality, they will cease to teach us further, since, after leading us to the beatific vision of our Creator when we have been perfected by the glory of eternal flesh and spirit, they have nothing greater to promise. For this reason, the book of Psalms, which is **/121/** made up of the number one hundred and fifty, concludes appropriately in divine praise – deriving, indeed, the beginning of blessedness from temperance and the carrying out of the divine Law, when it says, *Blessed the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly*,[283] and so forth, but near the end commending the new joys of the world to come, and in the very end concluding everything in the praise of God, when it says, *Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the church of the saints*,[284] and finally,

278 Cf. Gen. 1:9.
279 Cf. Ambrose, *De Noe* 16.58 (CSEL 32, 453–54).
280 Ps. 106:25 (107:25).
281 Exod. 14:21.
282 Ecclesiastes 1:7.
283 Ps. 1:1.
284 Ps. 149:1.

let every spirit praise the Lord.[285] This whole Hundred and Fiftieth Psalm is deservedly sung and completed in the praise of God, because without a doubt the sum of all our blessedness is in this, that, living in his house, we may praise him forever.

[8:4] And the ark rested in the seventh month, the twenty-seventh day of the month, upon the mountains of Armenia. *The significance of the fact that the ark 'rested in the seventh month' goes back to that seventh rest*,[286] which has been mentioned so often, because all those who have been made perfect and who have been, so to speak, 'squared up' by the constancy of their preoccupation with God, strive for rest. And very properly the ark came to rest on the twenty-seventh day of the same month, which number is, according to the science of mathematics, the number three cubed.[287] For the number three corresponds to the religious devotion of our mind on account of *the memory by which we renew our worship of God, the intelligence by which we know him, and the will by which we love him*.[288] But in order to make this trinity into a square from a single and straight line, multiply three by three, making nine. And to give the resulting square height as well and make it solid, multiply again nine by three, making twenty-seven. That is, you will make up the number three cubed, in which the ark rested, because the Church, as if 'squared up' by the stability of its mind and actions, not only awaits rest in this life but also acquires eternal rest in the next. And *it rested upon the mountains of Armenia*, because, having trampled under foot the peak of earthly ostentation, the Church draws near to the soul with heavenly joys even while living in this exile on earth.

[8:5a] And the waters were going and decreasing until the tenth month. The tenth month can express the time when the saints enter into the joys of eternal light **/122/** with the Lord. And it also signifies the receiving of the same kingdom of heaven in the name of the tenpence that was given to the workers in the vineyard in the Gospel.[289] The reason is that the tenpence is

285 Ps. 150:6.

286 Augustine, *CF* 12.19 (CSEL 25, 347). The 'seventh rest' appears to be Augustine's shorthand expression for the association of the number seven with the idea of rest that Bede develops in connection with the seventh day, the seventh month, the seventh age, etc.

287 For the concept of *ternarius quadratus solidus*, the square of three made solid, or three cubed, cf. Augustine, *CF* 12.19 (CSEL 25, 347); *DCD* 20.7 (CCSL 48, 710); Isidore, *Etym.* 3.7.5.

288 Augustine, *CF* 12.19 (CSEL 25, 347).

289 Cf. Matt. 20:1-16: the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. Bede apparently takes 'the tenth month' as a typological allegory for the 'tenpence' [*denarius*] of the parable – both being anagogical figures for the kingdom of heaven. But it is possible that he merely wants us

made up of ten obols.[290] Therefore the waters, which wash the ark, go and decrease until the tenth month, because the washing of baptism ceases after it has fulfilled its function in each and everyone of the faithful. For no one can be cleansed a second time in the same fountain of sacred baptism if he sins; but it sends those washed and sanctified to the hope of life in heaven just once, namely at the time when they may come and appear before the face of God.

[8:5b] For in the tenth month, the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains appeared. The first day of the tenth month can be understood to signify the beginning of eternal life, in consequence of which even those placed in this life *taste*, and the saints *see, that the Lord is sweet*.[291] *The tops of the mountains* appear on that day, because the more perfectly this happens in the purity of their hearts, the more certainly it becomes clear how worldly eminence is puffed up in vain.

[8:6] And after that forty days were passed, Noah, opening the window of the ark which he had made, sent forth a raven, and so forth. I said above that the window of the ark that is opened after the flood signifies the secrets of the divine mysteries into which the baptized are specifically initiated.[292] But some apply these sacraments to the attractions of the world, while others apply them to the works of religion; and the former, indeed, are represented in the raven, the latter in the dove. And since forty is made up of ten multiplied by four, the fulfilment of the divine law, which is accomplished through the grace of Christian doctrine, can rightly be signified in the number of days, forty. For the Law is contained in the ten commandments, and the doctrine of the Gospel is described in four books. And fittingly after the beginning of the tenth month, after the appearance of the tops of the mountains, forty days pass and thus, by opening his window, Noah revealed the way for the entrance of new light into the ark, because it is a fact that, having revealed to the faithful the life to come that they are to receive and having revealed the pride of those set outside the Church who boast of worldly glory, Christ also revealed to his faithful that the commandments of the Law must be carried out not by the strength of human free will, but by

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to understand that the number ten in both cases signifies the kingdom of heaven.

290 The ancient *denarius* ('made up of ten') originally contained ten *asses*. According to OLD, the *obolus* was a Greek coin equal to one-sixth of a drachma. However, in the Vulgate Old Testament, there are said to be twenty obols in a shekel (cf. Exod. 30:13, etc.), and Ambrose (*Epistola* 7.1 [PL 16, 904]) equates the shekel with a double drachma. Cf. Bede, *De tabernaculo* 3.1635-40 (CCSL 119A, 135).

291 Ps. 33:9 (34:8).

292 See *In Gen.* 2.1232-44 (above, pp. 177–78).

the gift of Christian grace **/123/** through him. After they come to understand this faith and the humility of soliciting divine help in all things, they will then be entitled to know also the higher gifts of the kingdom of heaven, as it were with the window in the ark newly opened. But, as I have said, some use this very knowledge of the gifts of heaven for their own destruction, and others for their salvation. Hence, in connection with sending the raven forth from the ark, Scripture properly adds,

[8:7] Which kept going forth and returning until the waters were dried up upon the earth. It does not say, 'it went forth and returned to the ark', but *it kept going forth and returning until the waters were dried up upon the earth*,[293] clearly because it kept turning here and there in uncertain flight, now starting to go away, now returning as if about to enter the ark, but nevertheless not reseeking the window from which it had gone forth, but rather wandering outside right up to the time when, after the waters had receded, it found rest and a seat for itself outside the ark. Rightly compared to this departure and journeying are those people who have been instructed and imbued in the divine sacraments indeed, but nevertheless not laying aside the blackness of earthly delight, love the wide journeyings of the world more than the enclosures of the Christian way of life.

[8:8-9] He sent forth also a dove after him to see if the waters had now ceased upon the face of the earth. But she, not finding where her foot might rest, returned to him into the ark, for the waters were upon the whole earth. And he put forth his hand and caught her and brought her into the ark. The dove, as I have said, signifies the spiritual and guileless mind of the elect. These are the ones who, with the window of heavenly contemplation opened up to them, spurn the more cautiously all the things that go on in the depths, the more loftily they discern those joys that endure

293 I omit the *non* which Jones twice inserts into the Vulgate text of Gen. 8:7. See Appendix 2: 2.1786 and 2.1788. A Northumbrian corrector of the Codex Amiatinus altered the *reuertebatur* ('returning') of Gen. 8:7 to *non reuertebatur* ('not returning'). Marsden (*The Text of the Old Testament*, pp. 204–205), following the reading in Jones's edition, assumes that Bede adopted the negative in his lemma and in his repetition of the phrase in the following sentence, and on this basis argues that 'there is good reason to believe that Bede had some part in the modification of the pandects; the emendation in A [= Amiatinus] might even be in his own hand'. But the variant reading that Jones accepts rests on a misunderstanding of Bede's comment. He does *not* mean: 'It does not say, "it kept returning", but "it kept *not* returning"'. Instead, he is contrasting the completed sense of the perfect tense, which the Vulgate might have employed but did not, with the repetitive and ongoing sense of the imperfect: 'It does not say, "it went forth and returned [*egressus est et reuersus est*, perfect] to the ark", but "it kept going forth and returning [*egrediebatur et reuertebatur*, imperfect] until the waters were dried up upon the earth"'. It is evident that Bede did not approve of the correction to the Amiatinus.

forever.[294] For, in remembrance of this dove, such persons despise all the delights of the world by flying higher, as it were, to such an extent that they take care not even to come in contact with them with the least traces of their mind, seeing that they can find no true rest for themselves in this world, in which both adverse and favourable things are carried away like running waters, inconstant and uncertain. And not only do these persons try to remain within the walls of the Church themselves, but they also try to lead others into it as much as they can either by their own example or by their prayers. Hence Scripture rightly adds:

[8:10-11b] And having waited yet seven days, he again sent forth the dove out of the ark. And she came in the evening, carrying to him a bough of an olive tree with green leaves /124/ in her mouth. For the bough of an olive tree, found outside and brought into the ark in the mouth of the dove, is the type of those who receive baptism indeed *outside of the Church*, but are fruitful with *an abundance of charity* and morally upright with pious devotion as if with the greenness of leaves.[295] Many of these are called back to the Church *at a later time as though in the evening* by the reconciliation of men filled with the Spirit as if by *the mouth of a dove*, because the dove did well seven days after the day when she did not find rest for herself outside.[296]

Indeed, the number of the days, seven, is usually applied mystically to the light of spiritual grace, because of course men filled with the Spirit, after withdrawing their thoughts from carnal desires, warned by this same spirit of grace, try to withdraw others from these desires as well. It can also be understood that it was prefigured in the dove, which carried the branch of the olive tree after the flood through the open window into the ark, that when the Lord was *baptized* in the Jordan *the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended* in *the form* of *a dove* upon him;[297] and that, after the sons of the Church have individually received baptism, in order for the gates of the kingdom of heaven to be opened for them also, the bishop lays his hand upon them by the anointing of the sacred chrism so that they may *receive the Holy Spirit*.[298] It accords aptly with this figural allegory that the raven

294 The sentence is artfully constructed; note the rhyme ‘spurn / discern’, *spernunt / cernunt*, and the play on depth and height.

295 On Bede’s belief in the efficacy of baptism outside the Church, see Carroll, *The Venerable Bede*, p. 106, and n. 57.

296 Augustine, *CF* 12.20 (CSEL 25, 349).

297 Matt. 3:16; Luke 3:21-22 (a blend of the two); cf. Mark 1:9-10; John 1:32.

298 Cf. Acts 8:14-17.

went out before the dove brought in the olive branch and did not return to the ark, plainly so that the prophecy might not pass over in silence even the faithlessness of Simon. He was indeed baptized in the Church, but, before he might receive the grace of *the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the hand*,[299] he was expelled from the Church, because, filled with *the gall of bitterness*,[300] he harboured, not the innocence of the dove's simplicity in a pious heart, but rather the raven's blackness in a wicked heart.

[8:11c-12] Noah therefore understood that the waters were ceased upon the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days, and he sent forth the dove, which returned not any more to him. The dove, which went out from the ark upon the earth when the waters ceased and did not return, signifies the souls of the saints going out from this life into the free light of the heavenly fatherland and not returning any more to earthly pursuits. In this fatherland, of course, just as *prophecy will be made void*, *knowledge will be destroyed*, and *tongues will cease*, so also will the water of baptism dry up; but *charity will never fall away*,[301] by which the Truth and life immutable, eternally present, will be seen and praised. And since it is the gift of divine grace not only that we do good works but also that after good **/125/** works we come to eternal life, the dove rightly went out not only after seven days, in order to carry the branch of the olive tree back into the ark, but also, after bringing back the olive branch, it departed after another seven days, in order to enjoy the unrestricted sight of the sun and, as it were, the new world. For the grace of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, and from its abundance we all receive grace for grace – namely the grace of a blessed reward for the grace of good action.

[8:13] Therefore in the six hundredth and first year, the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were altered upon the earth, and opening the covering of the ark Noah looked, and saw that the face of the earth was dried. The 'covering' of the ark means its highest plank, of which it had already been said, *and in a cubit you shall finish the top of it*.[302] I have said that in this covering one cubit long and wide there is clearly signified *the mediator of God and men*[303] himself,[304] who wished to be associated after the manner of men with the members of his Church,

299 Acts 8:18.
300 Acts 8:23.
301 1 Cor. 13:8.
302 Gen. 6:16.
303 Cf. 1 Tim. 2:5.
304 See *In Gen.* 2.1261-64 (above, p. 178).

so that he might transcend it exceedingly by the dignity of his power and protect it altogether from the deep. And, as the flood receded, Noah opened this covering because, after the sacrament of baptism has been performed, it is proper for the secret mysteries of the Lord's Incarnation to be disclosed more carefully from the mouth of the learned to each of the faithful as occasion offers, so that, knowing the things that he did and taught in the flesh, they may follow his footsteps by imitation to the best of their ability.[305] And this is very appropriately said to have been done *in the first* after six hundred years, *in the first month, in the first day of the month* in order that the beginning at once of the year, the month, and the day might point out the new beginning of the spiritual life which was to be undertaken by the faithful. And finally this same month in which under the Law Passover was also ordered to be celebrated[306] is called 'the month of the new',[307] expressly on account of the great sacrament of the renewing of our old life in the passion of Christ.

[8:14] In the second month, the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried. It was said above that in the beginning of *the first month the face of the earth was dried*,[308] and now it is written that nearly at the end of the second month *the earth was dried*,[309] evidently because in the first instance the ground was dried out on the surface as the plants turned green, so that it could be revived and bring to life again the plants which the water had destroyed. But now it was dried deep down even to the point where **/126/** it could sustain the steps of those trampling upon it; it was clothed to such an extent with flourishing plants that it was even suitable for pasturing flocks and herds.

[8:15-18a] And God spoke to Noah, saying, Go out of the ark, you and your wife, your sons, and the wives of your sons with you. All living things that are with you of all flesh, as well in birds as in beasts, and in all creeping things that creep upon the earth, bring out with you, and go

305 Cf. Bede, *In Marcum* 1.194-214 (CCSL 120, 442).

306 Cf. Exod. 12:11, etc.

307 *Mensis nouorum*: so in Exod. 23:15 and 34:18 (translated in Douay-Rheims as 'the month of new corn'). In Exod. 13:4 the Vulgate reads *mense nouarum frugum*, 'in the month of new corn'. Alter translates all three passages from the Hebrew as 'the month of the New Grain'. The month is Nisan: cf. Bede, *DTR* 11.11-12 (*BOT*, p. 203).

308 Gen. 8:13.

309 In Gen. 8:13, the verb in the Vulgate is *exsiccata esset*; here in Gen. 8:14, it is *arefacta est*. Although the verbs have essentially the same meaning, Bede suggests in his commentary that in context the second implies something like, 'was completely dried'. Precisely the same is true of the two Hebrew verbs that lie behind the Vulgate translation: see Alter, p. 47, n. 14.

upon the earth. Increase and multiply and fill it. So Noah went out, he and his sons, and so forth. In many various ways the same mysteries of the Church of Christ are recalled by frequently repeated symbolism. Therefore, Noah's departure from the ark into the earth cleansed by the flood, with the men and animals that he had brought in with him, prefigures the time when all of the faithful, washed clean by the fountain of baptism, also proceed openly to the exercise of good works under the leadership of Christ, to wit, the spiritual Noah, and increase and multiply by the constant augmentation of spiritual virtues. *Going into the world,* he says, *teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*,[310] which is to say in figurative language, 'lead all the kinds of animals that are to be cleansed by waters into the ark'. And he immediately added, *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*,[311] as though he were to say allegorically, 'And let the animals who have gone out from the ark after the flood enter into the earth's new face, flourishing with new blossoms, and there let them multiply and increase'.[312] And the fact that they exited from the ark on the twenty-seventh day of the month, which, as I stated above,[313] is the cube of the number three, signifies the perfection of faith which is sanctified in baptism, because it can in no way stumble, but it endures in the face of all the snares of the devil, forever unconquered and steadfast.

It should be noted, on the literal level so to speak, that the men and animals that entered the ark on the seventeenth day of the second month and departed a year later on the twenty-seventh day of the same month were in the ark for an entire solar year.[314] If, for example, the seventeenth day of the moon fell today **/127/** on the calends of April,[315] the twenty-seventh

310 Matt. 28:19.

311 Matt. 28:20.

312 For this 'reverse allegorization', see Introduction, p. 11.

313 See *In Gen.* 2.1723-24 (above, p. 192).

314 Both Jones (*BOT*, p. 204) and Wallis (*The Reckoning of Time*, p. 43, n. 120) cite Ambrose (*De Noe* 17.60 [CSEL 32, 455-57]) as a possible source for this claim. But in Ambrose's text of Genesis the flood apparently began on the twenty-seventh day of the second month, so that the complete year that he refers to is the lunar year of 354 days. He is concerned to show that the flood increased for six months from the twenty-seventh day of the second month to the twenty-seventh day of the seventh month, and then decreased for exactly the same period of time back to the twenty-seventh day of the second month in the next year, thus teaching us that 'order must be preserved'. See n. 323 below.

315 April 1.

day of the moon would fall next year on the day before the same calends,[316] when the three hundred sixty-five days in which the solar year is completed had run their due course.[317] Therefore they were a whole year in the ark, that is, as long as it took for the sun to illuminate all the climatic zones of the world[318] as the zodiac completed its course through the twelve solar months.[319] Thus, just as the water covering the whole globe washed it clean, so the sun, circling the whole globe in the same period of time as though in cooperation with the water, illuminated it with the light of its radiance. And as the Lord is usually referred to figuratively as 'the Fountain of life', so also he is called 'the Sun of justice'[320] – 'the Fountain' because he regenerates, 'the Sun' because he illuminates, according to the verse of the Psalmist, *For with you is the fountain of life, and in your light we shall see light*.[321] And Noah was in the ark with the creatures and men who were to be saved through the flood for an entire solar year, because the Lord through the whole period of this age[322] and through all the regions of the world not only washes his Church with the water of baptism but also illuminates it with the grace of his Spirit.[323]

[8:20] And Noah built an altar to the Lord, and taking of all cattle and birds that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar. As *a man just* and truly *perfect in his generations*,[324] after surviving so great a destruction, he gives thanks to the Creator immediately after building an altar, at the same time earnestly praying that the world not deserve to be struck ever

316 I.e., on March 31. Bede calculates the 'common' lunar year as 354 days (*DTR* 36.12-14 [*BOT*, p. 249]). Therefore, if the seventeenth day of the lunar month of one year falls on April 1, the seventeenth day of the same lunar month will fall 355 days later on March 21 in the following solar year (assuming that it is not a leap-year), and the twenty-seventh day, on March 31.

317 Cf. *DTR* 11.40-45 (*BOT*, p. 204). On the basis of this statement, Plummer dated *On Genesis* to AD 720 (*BOH*, 1, p. cxlix). See Introduction, pp. 45–46.

318 The 'climatic zones of the world' are the four seasons, the 'eastern' (autumn), the 'southern' (winter), the 'western' (spring), and the 'northern' (summer). See Bede, *DNR* 10 (CCSL 123A, 200–201).

319 For the *signifer circulus* or zodiac, see Bede, *DNR* 16.1-2 (CCSL 123A, 207).

320 Malach. 4:2.

321 Ps. 35:10 (36:9).

322 That is, the 'sixth' or present age.

323 Bede's observation that the flood in Genesis lasted for a full solar year of 365 days is original with him. See Introduction, pp. 6–8. The Genesis narrative does not explicitly say that the flood lasted for an entire solar year. Bede's allegorical interpretation is therefore based on his interpretation of the meaning of the text on the literal level.

324 Gen. 6:9.

again by so great a blow. And since he prays devoutly and piously, he is worthy to be heard very quickly. For this follows:

[8:21a/b] And the Lord smelled a sweet odour, and said to him, I will no more curse the earth for the sake of man. He made him worthy so that as a man holy and having foreknowledge of the future, like Abel at the beginning of the first age, he himself might also consecrate the beginning of the second age of the world by means of sacrifices offered to God. Both Abraham and Melchizedek are said to have done the same thing in the early part of the third age.[325] Likewise King David the Patriarch did the same at the beginning of the fourth age in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.[326] And Jeshua the high priest and Zerubbabel are said to have done the same in the beginning of the fifth age, when they restored in the same place the altar which the Chaldeans had destroyed.[327] All of these displayed the allegorical figure of our high King and true chief Priest, who consecrated to God the beginning of the sixth age, nay rather, the whole of the sixth age, with the eucharistic host **/128/** of his own body and blood on the altar of the holy cross.

And the fact that, when Noah made an offering, it says, *the Lord smelled a sweet odour*, does not signify the sweet odour which, arising from burnt offerings, could delight the human nose. Instead, it means the odour of the virtues, which, proceeding from the very pure heart of the offerer, ascended to the notice of the divine Majesty. The patriarch Isaac gave off such a smell in his son Jacob, when he said, *Behold the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field, which the Lord has blessed*,[328] and concerning which the Apostle says, *we are the good odour of Christ unto God, in every place*.[329] Indeed, it is very fitting for the mystical senses that Noah offered sacrificial victims after the flood, because this is also the order of our consecration in Christ, that first we are washed in the Fountain of life, and then we are renewed at the sacred altar by the offering of holy communion. Hence the Apostle says, *but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified*.[330] That is to say, you are washed in baptism, sanctified by the eucharistic host, and justified by good works.

325 Cf. Gen. 14:18-24.

326 Cf. 2 Samuel/2 Kings 24:16-25.

327 Cf. 2 Chron./2 Para. 36:17-19 (destruction of the old temple); Ezra 3:2-12 (building of the new temple).

328 Gen. 27:27. Perhaps Bede uses this odd construction to avoid saying that Jacob was giving off the smell of virtues, when he was deceiving his father.

329 2 Cor. 2:15; 2:14.

330 1 Cor. 6:11.

Moreover, in the holocausts from the clean animals that were offered to the Lord after the flood can also be found a specific allegorical figure of the holy martyrs, who not only preserved the purity of their life after the washing of baptism, but also poured out their own blood for the Lord. For the word '*holocaust*' *means* '*whole burnt offering*',[331] which was the name given to those sacrifices which were customarily totally consumed in the sacred fire, and from which nothing fell to the use of those making the offering. Hence such sacrificial animals properly prefigure the holy martyrs, who earned the right to glorify God not just in their life, but also in their death. And the altar on which these holocausts are offered is the very heart of the elect, built by our Noah, namely Christ, and divinely imbued with the fire of his Spirit, which he sent to earth and which he wished to be vigorously kindled. And it is appropriate that there are many holocausts, but one altar, since *there was one heart and one soul of the multitude of believers*,[332] and there was no division between them; and the Apostle says, [be] *careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.[333] Moreover, holocausts are offered from all the clean cattle and birds, because the faithful have attained the palm of martyrdom from every nation, from every race of mankind, and from every age. If we must suppose that there is truly a distinction between clean cattle and clean birds, in the cattle offered in the holocaust are signified those people of God from ordinary life who have been made **/129/** martyrs; but in the birds those who, after being accustomed frequently to seek the divine in the flight of contemplation, have been crowned in addition by a precious death.[334] Therefore, both the clean and unclean animals and birds make their exit from the ark, which is washed clean by the flood, but a sacrifice to the Lord is offered only from the clean. The faithful, having received forgiveness of sins, ascend from the washing of baptism, but many of these return to the filth of sins after baptism. Others steadfastly continue in the moral purity of life that they have received right up until the end. Still others take such great care of the moral purity that is received once, that they even offer souls for its safe-keeping.[335] Indeed, since the clean animals and birds had entered

331 Isidore, *Etym*. 6.19.35.

332 Acts 4:32.

333 Eph. 4:3.

334 I.e., by being martyred.

335 This appears to be a reference to the practice of infant oblation. Bede was himself placed in the monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow to be educated at the age of seven, probably as an oblate: cf. *HE* 5.24 (Colgrave and Mynors, p. 566), although as Whitelock points out, he may have 'remained in the monastery by his own choice' ('Bede and His Teachers and Friends', p. 19). On oblation, see the valuable note of Carroll, *The Venerable Bede*, p. 3, n. 7.

the ark by sevens and sevens, it is evident that holocausts were offered to the Lord from those pairs that remained.[336] And the seventh of the birds and cattle were rightly assigned to the sacrifice of the Lord, clearly on account of the grace of the sevenfold Spirit, by whose gift it is offered to the faithful not only so that they may believe in the Lord, but also so that they may suffer for him. The glory of virgins, which is contained in the odd number, so to speak, can also be signified very suitably in the cattle and birds which were found to be seventh in number and were made a holocaust of the Lord, since doing of course without the bond of marriage, it chose to lead a single life. And it is offered as if in a holocaust to the Lord when, despising carnal cares and acts, it consecrates itself wholly to the Creator by the fire of its supreme love. Of these John says in the Apocalypse, *These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb*.[337] And when Noah offered holocausts, *the Lord smelled a sweet odour*, because God the father gladly accepts both the suffering of the blessed martyrs and the virginal life of the faithful consecrated and offered to him through the grace of Christ.

[8:21a/c] And he said to him, I will no more curse the earth for the sake of man, for the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth. Therefore I will no more destroy every living being as I have done. The Lord promises that he will no more curse the earth, and that he will no more destroy every living being, because men are inclined to sin to such an extent that even if they should be punished again with a flood, nevertheless when it was over they would again entangle **/130/** themselves in vices and crimes. In this regard, it should be observed that although the thought of the human heart is said to be prone to evil from adolescence, which is without doubt the age when the enticements of carnal desires are usually aroused in us, nevertheless it does not follow that we first begin to be guilty of sins at puberty, although the age of licentiousness may excite us from then on to committing greater ones. For there is also that divinely inspired sentence which says, *a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb*,[338] the very yoke,

336 Bede has already explained (see *In Gen.* 2.1446-49, above p. 184) that, according to his understanding of Gen. 7:2-3, seven of each of the clean beasts and birds entered the ark. When they departed after the flood, the seventh of each of the species was reserved for the holocausts. Here Bede assumes that these were offered in pairs, each pair consisting of a seventh animal and a seventh bird.

337 Rev. 14:4.

338 Sirach 40:1.

namely, of the first transgression, on account of which we are all conceived in iniquities and brought forth into the world in sins, although from the time of entering adolescence we wilfully add more sins to those with which we came into this light not of our own will, but burdened by the fault of the paternal guilt. From all of these we are only delivered by the grace of God through Jesus Christ. *Therefore*, he says, *I will no more destroy every living being as I have done*. But how far this promise of divine mercy extends Scripture makes clear when it adds,

[8:22] All the days of the earth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, night and day, shall not cease. For after it said, *all the days*, it immediately added, *of the earth*, in order that you might understand that mankind must needs be secure from the onset of a universal flood for all the days that the earth will be in its present state. But the time will come, after this constant succession of passing events that goes on year by year has ceased, when the whole world with its living creatures will be destroyed by fire, as Peter attests when he says *that the heavens were before, and the earth out of water, and through water, consisting by the word of God, whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of Judgement*.[339] In this regard it should be noted that we must take the 'heavens' that he says not only perished by water but will perish by fire to be none other than this turbulent air that is nearest the earth, from which the 'birds of heaven'[340] take their name, because they fly about in it. For neither the ethereal nor the starry heavens are to be consumed by fire, just as they were not consumed by water.[341] **/131/**

[9:1-3] And God blessed Noah and his sons, and he said to them: Increase and multiply and fill the earth. And let the fear and dread of you be upon all the beasts of the earth and upon all the birds of heaven and all that move upon the earth. All the fish of the sea are delivered into your hand. And every thing that moves and lives shall be meat for you; even as I have delivered all the green plants to you. The literal sense is clear:

– that the beginning of the second age of the world is blessed by the Lord, as are the beginnings of the first and of the other ages. For Noah is blessed with his sons, that is to say, all those, whether born from his flesh

339 2 Peter 3:5-7.

340 Cf. Gen. 1:30.

341 On the distinction between the various 'heavens', see *In Gen.* 1.620-42 (above, pp. 86–87), and Bede, *DNR* 7 (CCSL 123A, 197–98).

or possessed of faith and obedience, who demonstrate that they are truly his sons.

– That his descendants are ordered to fill the earth, just as it is also known to have happened.

– That men are proclaimed to be a necessary terror to all the animals of earth and the birds of heaven.

– That these together with the fish are granted to them to eat, just as they received vegetables for consumption up to the flood.[342]

In this connection it should be noted that when he orders that the fear and dread of them be upon the animals, he assuredly forbids the same to be upon men. To wish to be feared by an equal is indeed to be proud contrary to nature; and yet it is necessary that rulers be feared by their subjects, when they perceive that the latter fear God not at all. For insofar as rulers exact fear of themselves from those living perversely, they dominate them not as if they were men but as if they were animals; since plainly, given that they have been subdued as beasts, they must also lie prostrate in terror.[343]

But in the spiritual sense Noah is blessed with his sons, that is, our Lord and Saviour with the apostles, whom he also deigned to call his sons, saying, *the sons of the bridegroom cannot mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them*.[344] God the father commanded these to increase and multiply through the whole world, when the Lord says to his disciples, *going into the whole world, preach the gospel to every creature*,[345] that is, to all the nations. For all the commandments of the Lord Saviour are certainly the commandments of the Father. Indeed he himself said, *The things therefore that I speak, even as the Father said unto me, so do I speak*.[346] For he subjected all the animals that move on the earth, all the birds of heaven, and all the fish of the sea to their dominion, when he says, *whatsoever* **/132/** *you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven*.[347] Of course, animals, birds, and fish imply persons of different natural qualities and morals, which are all given to the sons of Noah after the flood for food, because after the Lord brought the

342 Cf. Gen. 1:29. That is, mankind was vegetarian in the first age of the world.

343 Jones ('Bede's Commentary on Genesis', p. 129) comments on this paragraph: 'The civil ruler is responsible for keeping his subjects God-fearing. This balance of clerical and secular power, which concerned the whole Middle Ages, was Bede's special topic in his *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*'.

344 Matt. 9:15.

345 Mark 16:15.

346 John 12:50.

347 Matt. 18:18.

gift of the water of baptism to the world, he desired that it be served to all nations as well, saying to the apostles, *Going therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*.[348] For they are given to the sons of Noah for food in accordance with what is said to Peter when all the four-footed animals and creeping things of the earth were displayed in the mystic linen sheet, *Arise, Peter, kill and eat*.[349] That is, destroy the wicked habits of the Gentiles by preaching the truth, and bring them into the body of the Church by initiating them into the sacred mysteries. Hence, this is rightly added,

[9:4] Saving that flesh with blood you shall not eat. For 'blood' justly signifies carnal desires and carnal thought. But blood is drained out when there is a renunciation of carnal attractions and thoughts, whereby life was lived wickedly, so that such persons may be able to say with the Apostle, *And now I do not live, but Christ lives in me*.[350] And again, *immediately I took no comfort in flesh and blood*.[351] Otherwise, he who begins to incorporate into the unity of the holy Church through baptism each and everyone of those persevering in their former sins, eats, as it were, with blood the animals given to him by the Lord, since he receives in fellowship those who still maintain their earlier way of life as if with their conscience in a stranglehold. But it is said that in this matter the transgression of the giants was the greatest, because they ate flesh with blood; and therefore, after they were destroyed in the flood, the Lord allowed men to feed upon flesh, but forbade that they should do it with blood.

[9:5-6a] For I will require the blood of your lives at the hand of all the beasts, and at the hand of man, at the hand of every man and of his brother will I require the life of man. Whosoever shall shed human blood, his blood shall be shed. Scripture refers metaphorically to that vital principle, by which men are *given energy and* **/133/** are *sustained and live*[352] in the flesh by means of the breath of life, as 'the blood of lives',[353] just as it calls metaphorically the effect of the devouring by which they kill a

348 Matt. 28:19.

349 Acts 10:13. In a vision (Acts 10:11-12), Peter saw a linen sheet descend from heaven, 'Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts, and creeping things of the earth, and birds of heaven'.

350 Gal. 2:20.

351 Gal. 1:16.

352 Isidore, *Etym*. 4.5.4; 11.1.122.

353 Bede treats the Vulgate's *sanguinem animarum*, 'the blood of lives', or 'the blood of breaths', as a metaphor for the breath of life (in the original Hebrew the underlying meaning is simply 'lifeblood': so Alter, Speiser).

man, 'the hand of the beasts'. For what sensible person truly believes that the healthy blood of a man has to do with the essence of the breath of life? Although the same Lawgiver[354] seems to say more plainly elsewhere, *For the life of all flesh is in the blood*.[355] For this was said in the same way that it was said, *and the rock was Christ*[356] – not because of what it was, but because of what was signified by it. *But not without reason did the Law want to signify the breath of life by blood, that is to say, the invisible thing by the visible, since the blood diffused in our body through all the veins from the heart itself has more power than the other humours, so that, wherever a wound has been inflicted, it is the only one of the humours that comes out. Accordingly, the breath of life, which exerts power invisibly over everything that we consist of, is better signified by that which exerts power over all the visible things that we consist of*.[357] Moreover, it is easy to understand how God requires the life of man at the hand of man, seeking vengeance on the one who has sinned. But it can rightly be asked how it may also be required of beasts which are lacking in reason, unless perhaps we may understand that the mystery of the resurrection to come was revealed to us here, when all the bodies of the human race which had either been eaten by wild animals or consumed in any other way or torn apart are restored whole. All the vital spirits of men which had been separated by whatever kind of death from the body are each and everyone returned to their own bodies, in order that they may obtain in the Last Judgement with the same bodies either eternal life for their good actions or eternal death for their bad.

And it is fittingly added, *Whosoever shall shed human blood, his blood shall be shed*. How many have shed human blood, and their blood has not been shed! And others have killed a man by poison or by hanging, and nevertheless, although the man is dead, blood has not been shed. Therefore, how is the Lord going to shed their blood in the case of such a man, when he who killed did not shed blood, unless 'the blood of a man' is to be understood, as I have said, as that vital principle by which he exists? Because whoever sheds blood, that is, whoever kills a man by any kind of death, his blood will be shed because he loses his eternal life by sinning, for *the soul that sins, the same shall die*.[358] Similar to this is what is said to Peter, *for all* **/134/**

354 That is to say, Moses, whom Bede understands to be the author of the Pentateuch.

355 Lev. 17:14.

356 1 Cor. 10:4.

357 Augustine, *Contra aduersarium* 2.6.21 (CCSL 49, 107).

358 Ezek. 18:20. 'Soul' is *anima* in the Vulgate, the same word which is translated elsewhere in this section on Gen. 9:5-6 as 'life', 'breath of life', or 'vital spirit'.

that take the sword shall perish with the sword,[359] or if this were to be said plainly, 'all who kill a man unjustly, the same also perish in their soul by the killing'. And it is fittingly added,

[9:6b] For man was made in the image of God. And indeed for this reason it is a still greater crime for an innocent man to be killed, since the one who does this not only undoes the work which God did, but also destroys his very image. Therefore God requires the vital spirits of men from the beasts and men by whom they had been expelled from the body, because he made man in his own image in that he wished him to remain forever, and not to perish with the death of the body in the way that animals do. And by reason of this sacrament meat is not permitted to be consumed with blood, so that we may always be reminded by this rule that we were created in the image of our Creator as far as concerns the essence of the breath of life, and in order that we should fear to destroy the same image that is in us by sinning.

[9:8-9] Thus also said God to Noah and to his sons with him, Behold I will establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you, and so forth up to the point where it says,

[9:11b] and all flesh shall be no more destroyed with the waters of a flood, neither shall there be from henceforth a flood to waste the earth. The literal sense is plain, that from this time forth the world is not to fear the judgement of water, but of fire. And by this insistent repetition[360] the heresy of Origen, who dared to lay down as Christian doctrine the eternal return of infinite ages running always in the same order, is refuted and condemned.[361] Mystically, however, the fact that the water of the flood will not return to the earth signifies that once the water of baptism has been received it cannot be renewed. For *he that is washed, needs not to wash*,[362] as the Lord himself declares. And those who, once having been washed by the waters of tribulations, have arrived at eternal salvation, are not sent further into these same waters of purgation, but will joyfully sing forever to their Redeemer, *We have passed through fire and water, and you have brought us in into a refreshment*.[363] Nor should what is said above about the waters of the flood, *I will no more curse the earth for the sake of man*,[364] nor what is said here,

359 Matt. 26:52.

360 The 'insistent repetition' of Gen. 9:8-11, which Bede omits to quote in full, includes God's twice-stated 'I will establish my covenant with you'.

361 Cf. Jerome, *Ep.* 124.5 (PL 22, 1063); Augustine, *DCD* 21.17 (CCSL 48, 783).

362 John 13:10.

363 Ps. 65:12 (66:12).

364 Gen. 8:21.

neither shall there be from henceforth a flood to waste the earth, seem to be contradicted by the allegorical significance of baptism, since the water of baptism is not **/135/** liable at all to confer a cursing or wasting on our mind or body, but rather a blessing and health. But it should be understood that in some sense the Lord curses our old way of life in baptism, and wastes it, when he orders *us to renounce* the devil *and all his works and vanities*.[365] And so, finally, having been cleansed by a new profession of faith, we may deserve to attain the grace of eternal blessing.

[9:13-15] I will set my rainbow in the clouds, and it shall be the sign of a covenant between me, and between the earth. And when I shall cover the sky with clouds, my rainbow shall appear. And I will remember my covenant with you and with every living soul that bears flesh; and there shall no more be waters of a flood to destroy all flesh. How often the rainbow in the sky is seen right up to the present day! The sign of the divine covenant reminds us that the earth will not again be destroyed in a flood. But, if it be properly considered, it also sets before our eyes a sign of the future judgement which will come upon the world by fire. For not without reason does it gleam blue and red at the same time, since by the colour blue it bears witness to us of the waters that have gone past, and by the colour red, of the flames that are to come.[366] Moreover, the heavenly rainbow, which they call Iris,[367] is fittingly placed as a sign of divine mercy. Indeed, it is the nature of the rainbow to *gleam in the clouds and respond to the rays* of the sun, *whereby the dewy darkness is illuminated with a kind of pleasing profession of faith*.[368] The *Sun of justice*,[369] therefore, is Christ; the clouds illuminated by it are the saints, whose names are written in heaven, and of whom the Psalmist says, *O Lord, your mercy is in heaven, and your truth reaches even to the clouds*.[370] And when the rainbow appears in the clouds the Lord is mindful of his promise not to destroy the earth by flood, since through the intercessions of the saints, who are able to shine not by their own but by his light, he will be merciful to the faithful, when they lift up the eyes of their mind to a longing for heaven and acknowledge his glory in the deeds and words of the just who have gone before or even with their own deaths – in his clouds so to speak.

365 Gregory, *Hom.* 29.3 (CCSL 141, 247).

366 Cf. Gregory, *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem* 1.8.29 (CCSL 142, 119); Isidore, *De natura rerum* 31.2.19-22 (ed. Fontaine, pp. 285–87).

367 Cf. Isidore, *Etym.* 18.41.2.

368 Augustine, *Contra aduersarium* 1.20.43 (CCSL 49, 75).

369 Malach. 4:2.

370 Ps. 35:6 (36:5).

[9:16] And the rainbow will be in the clouds and I will see it and I will remember the everlasting covenant which was made between God and /136/ every living soul of all flesh which is upon the earth. God, who pardons and pities our frailty for the sake of the merits of the saints, by which they appear glorious and divine in his light, is said in human fashion to remember his covenant after seeing the rainbow in the clouds, but he who can never forget anything does not remember anything anew. For *he has remembered his covenant forever*,[371] but to us he seems to remember the covenant which he established with us when he gives us the aid of his protection when we are mired in troubles. Hence it is well said in the Psalm, in the voice of certain afflicted persons to whom the help of divine mercy seemed tardy, *Why do you turn your face away and forget our want and our troubles*.[372]

[9:20] And Noah, a husbandman, began to till the ground and planted a vineyard. It is pleasing frequently to repeat the words which the Lord spoke to the Jews, *If you did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe me also; for he wrote of me*.[373] For in this passage Moses, who is telling the story of Noah and his sons, signifies figuratively the passion of the Lord and the piety of the people who believed in him, and also the disbelief of those who denied the faith. In truth, Noah, tilling the ground, planted a vineyard, because the Lord, having a care for the human race, established the Synagogue among the Jewish people. And the Psalmist, of course, mentions this vineyard, saying, *You have brought a vineyard out of Egypt*.[374] And the Lord, speaking to the Jews, says in the Gospel, *A man planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it*, and so forth to the end of the parable, when he asks, *What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do to those husbandmen?* They say, *He will bring those evil men to an evil end, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen*.[375]

[9:21] And drinking of the wine, he was made drunk, and was uncovered in his tent. The Lord drank wine when he took the chalice of the passion. *He was made drunk* by drinking when through suffering for us he came to the extreme of death. *He was uncovered in his tent* when he endured abuses and derision and submitted to the ultimate torment of the cross among the people of the Jews, whom he had made his own and among whom he had

371 Ps. 104:8 (105:8).
372 Ps. 43:24 (44:24).
373 John 5:46.
374 Ps. 79:9 (80:8).
375 Matt. 21:33; 21:40; Mark 12:9; Matt. 21:41.

been accustomed for a long time to remain as if in his tent, revealing very clearly to all the truth of the mortal substance which he deigned to take on. **/137/**

[9:22-23] Which when Ham the father of Canaan had seen, to wit, that his father's private parts were uncovered, he told it to his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth put a cloak upon their shoulders, and going backward, covered the private parts of their father; and their faces were turned away, and they saw not their father's sexual organs. Ham, who laughed[376] when he saw that *his father's private parts were uncovered*,[377] signifies the insulting and incredulous Jewish people, who rejoiced rather to hold in contempt the passion of our Lord and Saviour to their own destruction than, for the sake of being saved, to be glorified by it. *And he* told his *brothers outside* what had happened to their father, because *by* him the sacrament of the Lord's passion, *which had been hidden in prophecy*, until we came into possession of the gift of the second birth,[378] *was revealed and in some sense made public*.[379] Hence, the Apostle says, *But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews indeed a stumblingblock, and to the Gentiles foolishness*.[380] Furthermore, *in the two sons, the oldest and the youngest*,[381] are allegorically *figured*[382] those of whom he subsequently spoke, *But unto them that are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men*.[383] They both carry one and the same *mystery of the Lord's passion which is now past and done* just as they *carry one cloak on their back*, and *they do not see the nakedness of their father, because they do not consent to the killing of Christ, and yet*

376 It is nowhere explicitly stated in the Bible that Ham laughed when he saw his father naked, but his laughter is part of the Jewish commentary tradition. Note that Bede anticipates this (unexpressed) laughter in his previous comment that Christ endured the *inrisiones*, the derision, of the Jews.

377 Cf. Isidore, *Quaestiones* 1.8.4 (PL 83, 235).

378 The 'second birth' is the regeneration of the human race after Christ; the 'first birth' (see below) is the initial creation of mankind.

379 Augustine, *CF* 12.23 (CSEL 25, 351).

380 1 Cor. 1:23.

381 That Shem was the oldest, Ham, the middle, and Japheth, the youngest son is assumed from the order in which they are always named (cf. Gen. 6:10, etc.). (In the Hebrew Bible, Ham unexpectedly is called the 'youngest' son [Gen. 9:24 (cf. the comments of Alter and Speiser on this verse)], which in the Vulgate is altered for the sake of consistency to the 'younger' [*minor*].)

382 Augustine, *CF* 12.23 (CSEL 25, 351).

383 1 Cor. 1:24-25.

they show honour with the veil, as if knowing from whom they were born, that they were the sons of mercy who had been in the first birth[384] the sons of wrath. *But the middle son, that is, the Jewish people (*who are *the middle for this reason, that they did not 'comprehend the primacy'*[385] *of the Apostles, nor did the youngest trust in the Gentiles*[386]*) saw the nakedness of the father, because they consented to the killing of Christ*.[387] And it is well said of the other two that, averting their faces, they covered the shameful parts of their father, as if the matter of the polluted vineyard were displeasing to them. How much this vineyard, that is, the Jewish people, had degenerated from its ancestral nobility at the time of the Lord's passion was mystically signified when they offered vinegar instead of wine to the thirsting Lord on the cross;[388] he was thirsting for the faith and love of that people, but instead of the sweetness of faith and **/138/** fervour of love, he drank it with the bitterness of hatred and infidelity.[389]

[9:24-25] And Noah awaking from the wine, when he had learned what his younger son had done to him, said, Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers. Awaking from the wine, Noah curses his offspring by whom he was laughed at; but he rewards those who honoured him as a father with the blessing they merited. And the Lord, after he *slept* in death and rose again immortal, in the words of the Psalm, *struck all* his *adversaries without cause*, and *broke the teeth of sinners*,[390] but upon his own people he poured out the blessing of eternal salvation. And not only is Canaan subjected to a curse but also to the servitude of his brothers. *For what else is that people today, but a keeper of documents of the Christians, carrying the burden of the Law and the prophets in witness of the claim of the Church that we glorify ourselves by the sacrament which they announced by the letter of the text?*[391]

384 See 'second birth' above (n. 378).

385 Evidently an echo of Col. 1:18 (*primatum tenens*), but in a different sense.

386 The relevance of this clause, which must apply to Japheth, the youngest son (*ultimus*), and his people, is not clear.

387 Augustine, *CF* 12.23 (CSEL 25, 351).

388 Cf. Matt. 27:34; Mark 15:23; Luke 23:36; John 19:29.

389 This could be an example of 'reverse allegorization', where an event in the New Testament is taken to signify the progressive degeneration of the Jews in the Old Testament (see Introduction, p. 11), although Bede may have thought of it as tropology, that is, a moral interpretation that applied to the Jewish people at the time of the crucifixion and in the present. Passages such as this are essential for understanding the roots of European anti-Semitism: see Introduction, pp. 21–27.

390 Ps. 3:6 (3:5); 3:8 (3:7).

391 Augustine, *CF* 12.23 (CSEL 25, 351).

[9:26] And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; let Canaan be his servant. I have said that the primitive Church, which was gathered from the Israelite people, was signified allegorically in Shem, the first-born son of Noah, and that in Japheth, the youngest son, was signified the election of the Gentiles, which followed.[392] Hence also it is rightly said, *Blessed be the Lord God of Shem. For although he is God of all the Gentiles, yet in a sense even now among these very peoples he is called by his proper name 'God of Israel'; and for what reason was this done, but from the blessing of Japheth? For the Church occupied the whole world in the people of the Gentiles. This was foretold straightway, when it is said* subsequently,[393]

[9:27a] May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem. *Japheth*, of course, *may dwell in the tents of Shem*, because the Church wanders on earth in the faith of the patriarchs and prophets – in the prophetic Scriptures, and in the sacraments of the Law, spiritually understood. For indeed we are accustomed to use tents in war or on a journey, and we, who come from the Gentiles to Christ, dwell in the tents of the Israelite people, because truly as long as we, who are placed on the road of this life, sigh for our heavenly fatherland, as long as we struggle, under the leadership and guidance of Christ, against the snares of the old enemy, we must always keep firmly in mind **/139/** at once the words and the deeds and the works of the ancient fathers as an example of life and faith. Since we are protected by their authority, we may strive more certainly and more securely for the palm of a heavenly reward when our sufferings are over. And even the name Japheth, which means 'enlargement',[394] is suited to the achievements of the holy Church, by which it has filled the whole world. Hence, playing upon the name itself, Noah says, 'May God enlarge Japheth', that is, 'enlargement'. Furthermore, what was said of Shem is properly repeated also of Japheth,

[9:27b] And let Canaan be his servant, because certainly the faithless Jews, although with an impious heart, offer a service of salvation to both peoples of believers – not only because they aid them with the authority of the sacred books and strengthen them in faith, but also because they follow after them, as far as they can, since of course by following after them for

392 *In Gen.* 2.2309-19 (above, pp. 210–11).

393 Augustine, *CF* 12.24 (CSEL 25, 351–52).

394 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 9.27 (CCSL 72, 11); Augustine, *DCD* 16.2 (CCSL 48, 498).

the sake of justice[395] they make them more deeply sharers in eternal blessedness, and also because, when the hardheartedness of their own blindness has been revealed, they teach them to render greater thanks to their Redeemer and Enlightener. Indeed, the name Canaan, which means 'commotion', is especially suited to this people.[396] For they cannot say, *He set my feet upon a rock, and directed my steps*,[397] since they are irresolute and always wavering in motion.

And according to the literal sense it should be noted also that, although Ham sinned, there is a reason why not he but his son Canaan is cursed, especially since the latter was not the first-born of Ham, but his last son. Indeed, it is written, *the sons of Ham: Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan*.[398] For at the same time it was foreseen on the spiritual level that the offspring of Canaan were going to sin much more than the other offspring of the sons of Ham, and therefore that they would deserve either to perish by the curse or to groan under the slavery to which they were subjected. That this was revealed about the Sodomites in particular, who came from the race of Canaan, is shown both by their unspeakable sin and by the horrible vengeance that was taken upon them, and by the destruction or enslavement of the Canaanites that they suffered, after the exodus from Egypt of the Israelite people, who descended from the offspring of Shem.[399] And indeed the Ethiopians are descended from Cush, the Egyptians from Mizraim, and the Libyans from Put,[400] because the names of these peoples are attested among the Hebrews to this day. Scripture reports no such crime and punishment in connection with them **/140/** as it does of the Sodomites and Canaanites. *God* also enlarged *Japheth*, so that he dwelt *in the tents of Shem*, and *Canaan* was *his servant*, when the Greeks and the Romans, both having arisen from the race of Japheth, seized possession of the kingdoms of Asia, in which the posterity of Shem dwelt, and among other things also made the Canaanites tributaries to themselves.[401]

[9:28-29] And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years, and all his days were in the whole nine hundred and fifty years, and he

395 Perhaps in the sense of 'the justice of the Law'. There may be an implied reference in this sentence to Hebrews, chap. 9, on the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old.

396 See *In Gen.* 3.1023-24 (below, p. 247).

397 Ps. 39:3 (40:2).

398 Gen. 10:6.

399 Cf. Exod. 34:11-12.

400 Cf. Isidore, *Etym*. 9.2.10; 9.2.127.

401 This is an example of a literal, or historical, allegory, where one historical event foreshadows another in the unredeemed world.

died. Just as the six hundred years of the life of Noah, which he completed when he entered the ark, signify the perfection of the faith and belief of those who submit to the sacraments of the Church for the sake of a heavenly and eternal reward, as I have taught above,[402] so also the three hundred and fifty years which he lived after the flood signify figuratively the great perfection of those who, having received the sacraments of life, serve the Lord faithfully right up until death. For, as I have said,[403] since the number three hundred is represented in Greek by the letter 'tau' ('tau' in fact is written in the shape of a cross), it very fittingly serves as a type of those who cannot vaunt themselves[404] except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence Gideon, both by the command and with the help of the Lord, overcame the innumerable army of the Midianites with three hundred men,[405] teaching us figuratively that we would win the wars both of this world and of our vices with the odds against us by the faith of the Lord's cross. But because the number fifty figuratively signifies 'rest',[406] it instructs us through the Scripture of the Law, which decreed that always in the fiftieth year the universal people of God have a total remission of all labours and freedom from servitude.[407] And therefore for the sake of a predetermined mystery *Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years* in order to teach us that, after receiving the washing of baptism, we ought to endure labours for the sake of the Lord in the hope of heavenly quiet and happiness. For he lived three hundred years, so that we may be patient in tribulation; he lived another fifty, so that we may also be rejoicing in hope. It is a fact that seven times fifty makes three hundred and fifty, and the number seven is allegorically appropriate to the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the number fifty to the true rest, which is granted to the elect by the same Spirit. We can also understand the sacrament of this number in this way, that he who would live after the flood three hundred and fifty years is the one who, with the help of the spiritual gift of baptism **/141/** which is received for all time, does not cease to labour for eternal rest in heaven. Happy is the one who will see the death of the flesh, or rather will pass from death to the life, which alone must be called the true life, he who has completed the course of the present life with such a height of perfection. Amen. End of the Second Book. **/142/**

402 *In Gen.* 2.1469-98 (above, pp. 184–85).
403 *In Gen.* 2.867-70 (above, p. 166).
404 Cf. Judges 7:2.
405 Cf. Judges 7:7.
406 See *In Gen.* 2.1190-94 (above, p. 176).
407 Cf. Lev. 25:10-15; Num. 36:4.

BOOK THREE

[10:1-2] These are the generations of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth; and unto them sons were born after the flood. The sons of Japheth: Gomer and Magog and Madai, Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras. The lineage of the family of Noah begins with his youngest son and is completed with his eldest. This mode of expression[1] is common in the Holy Scriptures, signifying mystically that, with the coming of Christ in the flesh, the younger people of the Gentiles were going to be preferred in faith to the older people of the Jews. But the sons of the sons of Noah who are mentioned are believed to have come into existence as the several progenitors of the different peoples who divided the world among them, so that the first-born Shem obtained Asia, the second son Ham Africa, and the last son Japheth Europe – at any rate with the proviso that, since Asia is greater by far in the geographical area of its lands than Europe or Libya,[2] the descendants of Ham and Japheth also possessed some portion of Asia.[3] From Japheth, therefore, *seven sons were born who possessed land in Asia from the Amanus*[4] *and the Taurus, the mountain-ranges of Syria, Coele,*[5] *and Cilicia, as far as the river Tanais;*[6] *and in Europe, as far as Gadira,*[7] *leaving behind their names for places and peoples. Many of these* names *were afterwards changed – the rest remain as they were. These are: Gomer, the Galatians; Magog, the Scythians; Madai, the Medes; Javan, the Ionians, who are also called Greeks, from whom the Ionian sea derives its name; Tubal, the Iberians, who are also called Spaniards*, deriving their

1 *Prolepsis*. See Introduction, pp. 19–20.

2 According to Isidore (*Etym*. 14.4.1), 'Libya' is synonymous with 'Africa'; cf. also Isidore, *Etym*. 14.5.

3 We may understand from this that Bede regarded Japheth as the ancestor of all Europeans, including the Anglo-Saxons. See Introduction, pp. 22–24.

4 Now the Nur Mountains of southern Turkey.

5 Coele-Syria, or modern Bekáa, the region between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges.

6 The river Don.

7 Cádiz.

name from the river Iberus.[8] *From these the Celtiberians derive their name, although some suppose that they are Italians; Meshech, the Cappadocians, from whom their chief city is called Mazaca*[9] *right up until today*, the city which is also called Caesarea from Caesar Augustus.[10] *Furthermore, the Seventy Translators believe that the Cappadocians take their name from the Caphtorim,*[11] *and the Thracians from Tiras, but the name for these is not sufficiently unchanged*.[12]

[10:3] And the sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah. *Ashkenaz, the Sarmatae, whom the Greeks call the Regini;*[13] *Riphath, the Paphlagonians; Togarmah, the Phrygians*.[14]

[10:4] And the sons of Javan: Elishah and Tarshish [*Tharsis*]**, the Kittim and the Dodanim**. *From the Ionians, that is, the Greeks, are born the Elisae, who are called the Elides,*[15] *from whom the fifth language of Greece is called Aeolian, which they call the 'penten dialecton'. Josephus thinks that the Tharsis* **/143/** *are the Cilicians, claiming that the aspirated letter 'theta' was mistakenly corrupted by posterity into 'tau' – whence also their chief city is called Tarsus, famed for the apostle Paul.*[16] Others suppose that Tharshish [*Tharsis*] from which Solomon's gold was brought[17] is a region of India. *The Kittim are the Citians, from whom the city Citium in Cyprus takes its name right up to today*.[18] *The Dodanim are the Rhodians* (for the better reading is 'the Rhodanim' or 'the Rhodim'), as *the Seventy Translators rendered it*,[19] and as our translator also put it in the book of Hebrew names.[20] The similarity of the letters *daleth* and *res* in Hebrew often leads to this error, so that the one is read for the other.[21] Moreover, Rhodes is *the largest of the Cyclades,*[22] *and formerly the most powerful city in the Ionian*

8 The river Ebro; cf. Isidore, *Etym*. 14.4.28.

9 Caesarea Mazaca, modern Kayseri, in Turkey.

10 Cf. Isidore, *Etym*. 15.1.37.

11 Cf. Deut. 2:23: the Caphtorim (i.e., the inhabitants of Crete) are called *Cappadoces*, the Cappadocians, in the Vulgate). See Alter, p. 889, n. 23.

12 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.2 (CCSL 72, 11).

13 The inhabitants of Regium, modern Reggio.

14 Isidore, *Etym*. 9.2.32-33.

15 The inhabitants of Elis in the Peloponnesus.

16 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.4 (CCSL 72, 12).

17 Cf. 1 Kings/3 Kings 10:22.

18 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.4 (CCSL 72, 12).

19 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.4 (CCSL 72, 12).

20 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 70).

21 Cf. Jerome, *In Ezech.* 8.27.15b/16 (CCSL 75, 369–70).

22 Rhodes is actually the largest island in the Dodecanese rather than the Cyclades, and

sea and famed for a naval battle, and on account of its very secure port a safe haven for all merchants.[23]

[10:5] By these were divided the islands of the Gentiles in their lands, every one according to his tongue and family in their nations. *If we read* the histories of the ancients,[24] *we will see that nearly all the islands and coasts of the whole world and the lands adjacent to the sea were occupied by Greek inhabitants, who, as I have said above,*[25] *took possession of all the maritime regions from the Amanus and Taurus mountain ranges as far as the British ocean.*[26] But while it is said, *every one according to his tongue and family in their nations*, it is clearly given to be understood, in the general view, that the individual sons of Noah who are mentioned here and the descendants of the sons of Noah made up the separate peoples and kindreds of different languages. For the same meaning concerning the variety of races and languages is added below, where the offspring of Ham and Shem are also enumerated.[27]

[10:6] And the sons of Ham: Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan. *Cush is now called by the Hebrews Ethiopia; Mizraim, Egypt; Put, Libya (from whom also a river of Mauretania is called Put right up to the present, and the whole region around it Putensis). Next, Canaan obtained the land which the Jews subsequently gained possession of after the Canaanites were driven out*.[28]

[10:7a] And the sons of Cush: Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca. *Seba* [*Saba*]*, from whom are descended the Sabaeans. Vergil says, 'the branch of incense belongs solely* **/144/** *to the Sabaeans' … 'and a hundred altars glow with Sabaean incense'*.[29] *Havilah, from whom are descended the Gaetulians, who cling to the desert in a part of farther Africa. Sabtah, from whom are descended the Sabathani, who are now* called *the Astabari.*[30] *But Raamah and Sabteca little by little have lost their ancient*

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the 'Ionian sea' must be understood as a general term for all the seas around Greece as far east as Rhodes.

23 Jerome, *In Ezech.* 8.27.15a (CCSL 75, 368).

24 Jerome mentions Varro's *Antiquities*, Sisinnius Capito (probably Sisenna the historian, not Sinnius Capito), and Phlegon.

25 This is Jerome speaking.

26 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.4 (CCSL 72, 12).

27 Bede seems to be guarding against the possibility that his readers might understand Jerome, as quoted above, to mean that the statement in Gen. 10:5 about the spread of peoples and languages applied solely to the sons of Javan (Gen. 10:4).

28 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.6 (CCSL 72, 12).

29 *Georg*. 2.117; *Aen.* 1.416-17.

30 A people in Ethiopia, near the Nile?

names; and the names that they now have in place of the old ones are unknown.[31] But yet from what Ezekiel says in the vision of Tyre, *the sellers of Saba and Raamah*, or as the Seventy Translators said, *'Raamah', they were your merchants*,[32] the latter seems to have founded his own people, and since Seba is added, his region seems to be the neighbour of this province.

[10:7b] The sons of Raamah: Sheba [*Saba*] **and Dedan**. *Here Sheba* [*Saba*] *is written with the letter 'sin', but above by 'samech', from whom we said the Sabaeans were named. Sheba therefore is now interpreted as meaning Arabia. For in the Seventy-first Psalm, where we have 'the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts',*[33] *in Hebrew it was written, 'the kings of Sheba and Seba' – the first name with 'sin', the second with 'samech',* which is similar to our letter. *Dedan is a people in the western part of Ethiopia*.[34]

[10:8-9a] Now Cush begot Nimrod. He began to be mighty on the earth, and he was a stout hunter before the Lord. While the descendants of Shem and of Japheth remained in the innocence of a life of honesty, there arose from the cursed offspring of Ham one who corrupted the condition of the human way of life by a new kind of living. So long as he was puffed up by his remarkable power, he at first lived by hunting; then, having gathered an army, he strove to exert an unaccustomed tyranny upon the peoples. Finally, in the verses that follow we read that he possessed a kingdom and built great cities, because Scripture, which says, *he began to be mighty*, affirms that he was the first to do these things. It says, 'he began', because he did these things first, and 'mighty on the earth', because, having neglected heavenly things wherein the just are mighty, he learned to seek out the meanest things and to put his hope in these.

[10:9b] From this came a proverb: Like Nimrod a stout hunter before the Lord. It was turned into a proverb because unaccustomed deeds were done in his times. And the additional phrase, *before the Lord*, is for the sake of magnifying the outrage, namely that **/145/** it was totally rash and arrogant that a man should dare to live in such a way on earth 'before the Lord', who looks down from heaven upon the sons of men. From this proverb it is certainly clear that there were many men at that time who avoided doing such things from fear of divine judgement, although another version has,

31 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.7 (CCSL 72, 12).
32 Ezek. 27:22.
33 Ps. 71:10 (72:10).
34 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.7 (CCSL 72, 12).

like Nimrod a giant hunter against the Lord.[35] Indeed, from *the ambiguity of the word in Greek*, which is '*enantion*', it can be interpreted either way.[36] In sum, *in the Psalm*, where we sing, *'let us weep before the Lord that made us',*[37] it is this word, 'enantion Cyrium'. The same word is *in the book of Job, where it is written, 'you have broken into a rage against the Lord'*.[38] Therefore the simple meaning of the giant is evident, that he was a stout hunter of brute beasts, like a mighty man; but like an impious man, he led an arrogant life against the will of the Creator.

[10:10] And the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon and Erech and Accad and Calneh in the land of Shinar. In the verses that follow it is more plainly revealed how Babylon was made; but here it is stated by way of preface what is there passed over in silence, that Nimrod was the founder of that famous city and its proud tower. And *the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon*, not only because it was the first founded of his cities but also because it was regarded as the chief city of that kingdom on account of its size and beauty. *Erech* is the city that is now *Edessa*;[39] *Accad*, the city *that is now Nisibis*, a city of Mesopotamia;[40] and *Calneh*, the city *that* is now called *Seleucia after King Seleucus, and that in fact is now also called Ctesiphon*.[41] But the added phrase, *in the land of Shinar*, seems to apply to all four of these cities. Indeed, Shinar is reported to be a plain of such great width that it could easily hold not only Babylon itself but many other cities as well.[42] And the fact is that Babylon with the cities of which it is the head signifies the proud glory of this world, which is liable to confusion; for 'Babel' means confusion.[43] Its founder rightly signifies figuratively the devil himself, the head of all evils. The name Nimrod, **/146/** which means '*tyrant*' or '*exile*' or '*sinner*',[44] is also aptly suited to him. For he is a tyrant because, rebelling

35 The Old-Latin version quoted by Augustine, *DCD* 16.3 (CCSL 48, 501); cf. 16.4 (505).

36 I.e., either 'before' or 'against'.

37 Ps. 94:6 (95:6).

38 Augustine, *DCD* 16.4 (CCSL 48, 505); Job 15:13, from the Septuagint out of Augustine.

39 Erech is modern Warka, in Iraq; it is at some distance from Edessa, the ancient city of southeast Turkey (for the identification of the two, cf., also, Isidore, *Etym.* 15.1.13).

40 Nisibis is modern Nusaybin, in southeast Turkey.

41 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest.* 10.10 (CCSL 72, 13). Calneh was in northern Syria; Seleucia was on the Tigris in central Iraq opposite Ctesiphon.

42 Shinar is the equivalent of 'Sumer': cf. Speiser, p. 67, n. 10.

43 Cf. Gen. 11:9; Isidore, *Quaestiones* 1.9.1 (PL 83, 237).

44 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 69).

against the Creator, he strove to obtain the citadel of God and the kingdom of the world; he is an exile because, having fallen from heaven, and having been cast out from the society of the angels who remained constant in their own position, the wretch leapt too high; he is a sinner because he scorned to be obedient to the will of his Maker. The character of a hunter deservedly fits him as well. For he places the snares of his deceits in the forest of this world, and by deception he hunts to the death men who, like stags and roes, are innocent of his nature and cleverness – the opposite indeed of those hunters, who seek with their teaching to seize the souls of men to lure them to eternal life. To these the Lord speaks, saying, *Come after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men*.[45] For this reason, their home was called Bethsaida,[46] that is, *the house of hunters*,[47] since these men were going to hunt for life. And Nimrod is the son of Cush, which means *Ethiopian*,[48] since truly the old enemy always arises as if afresh from a dusky nation of infidels by the performance of wicked teaching or work. From him the proverb remains right up to the present, namely that it may be said: *Like Nimrod a stout hunter before the Lord*,[49] since it can very truly be said of those who, behaving like the devil, are on his side, that when such ones hunt the souls of men to the death either by their word or example they are following the deeds of the old sinner and betrayer.

[10:11] Out of that land came forth Asshur, and built Nineveh and the streets of the city. *Out of that land* means out of the land of Shinar, from which *sprang up the empire of the Assyrians, who built the great city Ninus, named for Ninus, the son of Belus, which the Hebrews call Nineveh*.[50]

To be sure, since Scripture seems to be silent about the birth of Asshur, from whom the nation of the Assyrians arose, and is only found to say from which land he came forth to build Nineveh and the other cities which it mentions, some of the fathers understood him to be Asshur, the son of Shem, of whom we read in a subsequent verse.[51] But whether he was the same or another Asshur, it is certain that the empire of the Babylonians was the first in that land, and that the empire of the Assyrians, **/147/** whose chief city was Nineveh and who came from the same land, was the second.

45 Matt. 4:19.
46 Cf. John 1:44: 'Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter'.
47 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Matt. (CCSL 72, 135).
48 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 63).
49 Gen. 10:9.
50 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.11 (CCSL 72, 13).
51 Cf. Gen. 10:22.

[10:13-14] And Mizraim begot the Ludim and the Anamim and the Lehabim, the Naphtuhim and the Pathrusim and the Casluhim, from whom came forth the Philistines, and the Caphtorim. These seem to be rather the names of peoples than of individual men, since it is plainly stated, *and the Casluhim, from whom*[52] *came forth the Philistines*. For all these names end in *-im*, which in Hebrew is characteristic of the plural number in the masculine gender, and even in translation they signify the plural rather than the singular number. The Lehabim are the Libyans, and the Philistines are the Palestinians.[53] *The Caphtorim* are *the Cappadocians*, as we find stated in the book of the names of the Hebrews according to the opinion of *the Seventy Translators*.[54] Of *the remaining peoples* the names that are now in use are *unknown to us*. *But they inhabited the land from Gaza to the borders and territory of Egypt*.[55]

[10:15-18a] And Canaan begot Sidon, his firstborn, Heth and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Arkite, the Sinite and the Arvadite, the Zemarite and the Hamathite. From *Sidon, the first*born *of Canaan, the famed city of Sidon in Phoenicia takes its name, once the boundary of the Canaanites to the north. The Arkite founded Arcas, a town located opposite Tripolis in the foothills of the Lebanon, not far from which there was another city called Sini,*[56] *which, after being destroyed by the fickle consequence of wars, preserved only its original name for the place. The Arvadite are those who possessed the island Arvad,*[57] *separated from the Phoenician coast by a narrow strait.*[58] *To the present day this island, located near Tyre,* is plainly *observed to be a secure city and* to *have the town Antaradus located across from it.*[59] *The Zemarite possessed Emessa,*[60] *the noble city of Coele-Syria. Hamath up to our own time is so-called by the Assyrians as well as by the Hebrews, just as it had been called by the ancients. The Macedonians, who ruled in the East after Alexander, named it Epiphania.*[61] *Some suppose that Antioch was*

52 'Whom', *quibus*, is transparently plural in Latin.

53 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.13 (CCSL 72, 13).

54 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.2 (CCSL 72, 11).

55 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.13 (CCSL 72, 13).

56 For this town, Sinum or Sini, cf. Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v., 'Sinite'.

57 Cf. Ezek. 27:8 (KJV); 27:11, modern Arwad.

58 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.15 (CCSL 72, 13); with some phrasing from Jerome, *De situ*, s.v. '*Sidon*' (PL 23, 918).

59 Jerome, *In Ezech*. 8.27.11 (CCSL 75, 365).

60 Emes(s)a is modern Homs in Syria.

61 Modern Hama in Syria.

so-named.[62] But in fact there were two cities of Hamath, one being *Hamath the Great, which is now named Antioch*. Hamath is called *the Great* **/148/** *to distinguish it from Hamath the Less, which is called Epiphania*, where Zedekiah's eyes were put out by Nebuchadnezzar.[63]

[10:19] And the borders of Canaan were from Sidon as one comes to Gerar even to Gaza, until you enter Sodom and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboyim even to Lasha. For Lasha the old translation has *Lice*. *It* is *what is now called Callirhoë, where hot waters bursting forth flow down into the Dead Sea*.[64] Sidon, therefore, was the border of the Canaanites to the north, Gerar to the south, and Gaza next to Egypt.

[10:21] Of Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, sons[65] were born. Scripture speaks of him as the brother of Japheth, but is silent about him being the brother of Ham, because it understands that those whom it knows to be united in religious faith are rightly to be called brothers. Indeed, it shows that the faithless brother, although he was born to the same parents, was estranged from the fraternal company of the just.

Moreover, it seems to be signified by this sentence that, although the many sons born of Shem gave birth to many nations, nevertheless the offspring that descended through Eber [*Heber*] to Abraham and the nation of the Hebrews followed his faith and religion more especially. Hence, he is properly called their father, that is, the father of all the sons of Eber. And then in the building of the tower, as Scripture says, the sole *language of the whole earth*[66] … the first *language* of the human race *remained in the house of Eber*,[67] who lived in that age, as we read in subsequent verses,[68] which fact

62 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.15-18 (CCSL 72, 13–14).

63 Jerome, *In Amos* 3.6.2 (PL 25, 1059). For Hamath the Great, see Amos 6:2. In 2 Kings/4 Kings 25:7, Nebuchadnezzar is said to have taken Zedekiah to Riblah, where he put out his eyes.

64 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.19 (CCSL 72, 14); cf. Pliny, *NH* 5.15.72. For Lasha and Callirhoë, cf. Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. 'Lasha'.

65 'Sons' or 'children' is not in the Vulgate text, but is universally assumed by commentators and translators, including Douay-Rheims.

66 Gen. 11:9. Though there is no indication in the manuscripts of a hiatus, it appears that something has been lost from Bede's original text following this phrase. Bede's argument depends first on the etymological connection between '(H)eber' and 'Hebrew', and second on the assumption that Hebrew was the original human language – the language that was confounded at the time of the tower of Babel.

67 Isidore, *Allegoriae* 18 (PL 83, 103); cf. Augustine, *DCD* 16.11 (CCSL 48, 513–15).

68 Cf. Gen. 10:25. Bede, like other patristic commentators, understands 'in his [Peleg's, the son of Eber] days the earth was divided' to be a reference to the tower of Babel story. In

the Hebrew names of the men of the following age clearly show. This was in accordance with his deserts, as we must believe, since, having followed with his family the faith of his forefather Shem, he kept himself free from the treachery of this proud work. For not without reason did Abraham choose to be called 'the Hebrew',[69] but since he was able to imitate the life of this Seth,[70] he wished not only to have this name as a cognomen for himself but also to leave it to his descendants in the future. **/149/**

[10:22] The sons of Shem: Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram. *These occupy the part of Asia from the Euphrates river as far as the Indian ocean. For Elam is the one from whom the Elamites, the princes of Persia, come. Concerning Asshur, it has been said already*[71] *that he built the city Ninus. Arpachshad is the one from whom the Chaldeans come; Lud, the Lydians; and Aram, the Syrians, whose chief city is Damascus*.[72] For *in the Hebrew language Syria is called Aram*.[73]

[10:23] The sons of Aram: Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash. *Uz, the founder of Trachonitis*[74] *and Damascus, held the principate between Palestine and Coele-Syria. Hul is the one from whom the Armenians come; Gether, the Acarnanians or Carians.*[75] *In turn Mash, which the Seventy Translators wrote as Mosach, are called the Meones*.[76]

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fact, the tower of Babel episode (Gen. 11:1-9) is dropped into the Genesis narrative with only the most perfunctory of connections to the rest of the text ('And the earth was of one tongue, and of one speech. And when they removed from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and dwelt in it' [Gen. 11:1-2]). Bede makes Nimrod responsible for the construction of the tower (*In Gen.* 3.120-21, above, p. 219). Nimrod was the grandson of Noah's second son Ham (Gen. 10:1; 10:6; 10:8); Eber was the great-grandson of Noah's first son Shem (Gen. 10:21-22; 10:24; 11:21-22; 11:24) (Augustine makes him the great-great-grandson: cf. *DCD* 16.3). But Bede does not call attention to this, nor does he draw any explicit chronological conclusions. Perhaps it is significant that he does not try to place the tower of Babel into his Great Chronicle (*DTR* 66).

69 Gen. 14:13.

70 The point of this reference to Seth is obscure, particularly since he is not mentioned in this passage; 'Eber' or 'Shem' would seem to make more sense. Seth is in the line that leads through Shem to Abraham (as Augustine notes in *DCD* 16.10), and it is at least possible that Bede alluded to him in the (conjectured) omission in a way that would have explained the reference to him here.

71 *In Gen.* 3.162-64, above, p. 220.

72 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.22 (CCSL 72, 14); Josephus, *Ant*. 1.6.4.

73 Jerome, *In Ezech.* 5.16.56/8 (CCSL 75, 212).

74 Mentioned only once in the Bible, at Luke 3:1.

75 The Acarnanians were a people of northwest Greece; the Carians, of southwest Asia Minor.

76 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.23 (CCSL 72, 14).

[10:24] But Arpachshad begot Shelah, of whom was born Eber. From this Eber both Abraham and the people descended from him, as I have said above, are called Hebrew.[77]

[10:25] And to Eber were born two sons. The name of the one was Peleg, because in his days the earth was divided, and his brother's name Joktan. The 'division of the earth' is what Scripture calls what happened in the confounding of tongues. It called the son 'Peleg', that is, 'division', to leave in this a lasting memory of his piety to his descendants, since without doubt he preserved by the merit of his faith the primitive speech of the human race, after the tongues of the faithless were divided on account of their pride.[78]

[10:26-29] Which Joktan begot Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth, Jerah and Hadoram and Uzal, Diklah and Obal and Abimael, Sheba and Ophir and Havilah and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan. Jerome declares that he was unable to find the later names of these peoples, *but up to the present*, he says, *since they are far away from us, either they are called as they were at first or the names which have been changed are unknown*. But we read above[79] that Pishon, one of the four rivers of paradise, which our authors call the Ganges and which is unquestionably in India, flows around *all the land of Havilah*.[80] Clearly the land seems to have taken its name from this Havilah; for Josephus relates that he took *possession* with **/150/** his brothers *of the whole region of India from the river Cophen*[81] *which is called Hieira*.[82] But the Words of the Days[83] also relate that the servants of Solomon went over the Red Sea to Ophir, which was a region of India, and brought back from thence *gold* and *citrus trees and precious stones*,[84] and it is reasonable to believe that the word Ophir was derived from Ophir the son of Joktan.

[10:29-30] All these were the sons of Joktan. And their dwelling was from Mesha as we go on as far as Sephar, a mountain in the east. I said above[85] that Shem the firstborn of Noah signifies believers who come from

77 *In Gen.* 3.234-36, above, p. 223.

78 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.24 (CCSL 72, 14).

79 *In Gen.* 1.1543, above, p. 115.

80 Gen. 2:11.

81 The Cophen or Cophes was a tributary of the Indus.

82 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.26 (CCSL 72, 14); cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 1.6.4 (but Josephus does not in this paragraph make the statement Bede attributes to him).

83 *Verba Dierum*, or the Words of the Days, is the Vulgate's translation of the Hebrew title for Chronicles.

84 1 Kings/3 Kings 9:26-28; 10:11; 2 Chron./2 Para. 8:18; 9:10.

85 *In Gen.* 2.2300-31; 2.2347-50, above pp. 210–12.

the ancient people of God and Japheth believers who come from the Gentiles, and that Ham, making mock of his father's modesty and cursed on that account, typifies that part of those same people, who, remaining as it were in the middle, neither wished prior [to the time of Christ] to be a member of the faith with their fellow tribesmen, nor afterwards with the Gentiles. And therefore the locations of their dwellings are very appropriately suited to their figural meanings. Indeed, the sons of Eber, who is shown to have been the most outstanding man of the posterity of Shem, are said to extend their dwelling *from Mesha as far as the eastern mountain* which is called Sephar. *Mesha* is *a region of India* which in translation is '*exaltation*',[86] which signifies not a blameworthy and puffed up elevation of the mind, but rather that elevation of the mind to which the Apostle urges us, saying, *if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth*.[87] And what indeed is the eastern mountain, unless it is that of which Isaiah says, *come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob*?[88] It is rightly called a mountain because it lifts up all those ascending to it from an appetite for the meanest things to a desire for heavenly things.[89] It is rightly called a mountain in the east because it reveals the rising of the true light to all those flocking towards it. And it is also rightly named Sephar, that is, 'book',[90] for it is the book of life, in which are concealed all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and in which are written the names of all the elect. The dwelling therefore of the sons of *Joktan*, which means '*the little one*',[91] was from Mesha, that is, 'exaltation', *as we go on as far as the mountain in the east*, which is called 'book', because all the saints, striving for the humility of the righteous who have gone before, of whom it is said, **/151/** *the Lord keeping the little ones*,[92]

86 Jerome, *De situ*, s.v. 'Messe' (PL 23, 908); *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (PL 23, 781).

87 Col. 3:1-2.

88 Isa. 2:3.

89 Cf. John 3:12.

90 This etymological gloss (which seems to be correct, though puzzling as the name for a mountain) does not appear in Bede's regular sources. The closest I have found is Isidore, *Etym.* 6.2.15: *Titulus autem in psalmis Hebraicus ita est, Sepher Thehilim, quod interpretatur uolumen hymnorum*, 'The title of the Psalms in Hebrew is Sepher Thehilim, which means "the book of hymns"'.

91 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 67).

92 Ps. 114:6 (116:6). The point of Bede's remark is partly dependent on the rest of the verse, which he does not quote: *humiliatus sum et liberauit me*, 'I was humbled, and he delivered me'.

in the beginning of the religious way of life[93] lift up their mind from earthly evil, so that they may deserve to ascend to see the brilliance of the eternal Sun, and to be instructed from that same book of life, which is the Lord Christ, with the pages of eternal wisdom laid open.

Similarly, does not what is said about the sons of Japheth, *By these were divided the islands of the Gentiles in their lands*,[94] also indicate very plainly by the word 'Gentiles' itself the churches throughout the world? Like islands in the billows of the sea, they are continually beaten by the swollen and bitter tempests of the age, yet are not overcome. Sometimes indeed when the world is at ease they are washed as if by gentle waves, and sometimes when the world rages they are struck as if on the high seas by towering waves of adversities, but nevertheless they endure invincible in the state of their faith.

But conversely the sons of Ham have *the beginning of* their *kingdom* in *Babylon*,[95] that is, 'confusion', which is in the land of *Shinar*,[96] that is, '*the stench of them*'.[97] And this is in a 'plain',[98] because the wicked neither ascend the mountain of contemplation in order to seek out the divine, nor do they visit the calm of the intellectual islands by means of which they might transcend the cares of the transitory world through the higher freedom of the soul, but with unrestrained wantonness they delight only to be whirled about in wicked earthly desires. Truly, an end worthy of this beginning follows, for it is said that *the borders of Canaan were from Sidon as one comes to Gerar even to Gaza, until you enter Sodom and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboyim even to Lasha*.[99] *Sidon*, indeed, means '*hunting of sorrow*',[100] because in this passage it can only be understood as the means by which the old enemy hunts souls to destruction. Hence it is properly called 'hunting of sorrow', because it subjects all whom it captures to eternal sorrows. *The giant Nimrod*, who is called '*a stout hunter against the Lord*',[101] certainly signifies the like. With respect to Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbouring cities there is no doubt but that they presage the eternal torments of the wicked.

93 *Religiosae conuersationis*, possibly a specific reference to monastic life.
94 Gen. 10:5.
95 Gen. 10:10.
96 Cf. Gen. 10:10; 11:2.
97 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 71).
98 Gen. 11:2.
99 Gen. 10:19.
100 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 71).
101 Gen. 10:9, a blend of the Old-Latin and Vulgate wording.

[10:32] These are the families of Noah, according to their peoples and nations. By these were the nations divided on the earth after the flood. Let the attentive reader review again in order the names of the men or peoples who are said to have arisen from Noah's three sons, and they will be found **/152/** to be seventy-one in number – fourteen, that is to say, from Japheth, thirty-one from Ham, and twenty-six from Shem.[102] From this same number of families the languages and nations are believed to have filled the world, or rather from seventy-two, as a more enlightened tradition has it, since there was a certain one of them from whom two nations and peoples were afterwards born. Or possibly it should be understood that there are two Asshurs and that they gave rise to two peoples – the one who went out from the land of Shinar and built Nineveh and the other the son of Shem[103] (and thus the number of seventy-two nations may be made up). Nor is it irrelevant that the Lord sent out seventy-two disciples to preach,[104] because this was the number of peoples and languages to whom the word of the Lord was to be imparted. Thus, just as earlier he chose twelve apostles to be called to the faith on account of the same number of tribes of Israel, so he later assigned seventy-two apostles to teach the salvation of all peoples, who totalled the latter number.

[11:1] And the earth was of one tongue and of the same speech. Since by anticipation[105] Scripture had said that the sons of Noah divided the earth in their nations according to kindreds and languages and regions,[106] it goes back to show how men were divided from one another. Here it is evident beyond a doubt that the human race, as long as it served its Creator with due humility, lived in harmony with itself in pacific love. But when, becoming proud, it raised its neck against its Creator, it was soon justly punished, and was unable to keep peace with itself. But how great the happiness of men could be, even after having been cast out from paradise, if even then they would serve their Creator humbly, Scripture declares by the grace of our same Lord Creator and Redeemer, who conferred the knowledge of all languages upon the disciples who faithfully adhered to him by the Holy

102 Augustine reckons seventy-three: 15 from Japheth, 31 from Ham, and 27 from Shem, which number he then reduces to seventy-two (*DCD* 16.3 (CCSL 48, 503); Isidore reckons seventy-two: 15 from Japheth, 30 from Ham, and 27 from Shem (*Quaestiones* 1.8.14 [PL 83, 237]).

103 Compare Gen. 10:11 with Gen. 10:22.

104 Cf. Luke 10:1.

105 For the rhetorical figure of anticipation or *prolepsis*, see Bede, *DST* 2.1.1 (CCSL 123A, 143–44).

106 Cf. Gen. 10:5; 10:20.

Spirit sent from above.[107] Hence it happened by a wonderful ex*change of the right hand of the most High*,[108] that just as here the peoples were scattered from each other throughout the whole world and their languages separated on account of pride, so there on account of the merit of humility, with the diversity of languages made one, the peoples gathered *from every nation which is under heaven*[109] re-echoed the praises and miracles of God with one single and undivided confession and faith. And this city, in which languages are divided and peoples scattered, is deservedly called Babylon, that is, **/153/** 'confusion'; that city is called Jerusalem, that is, 'vision of peace',[110] in which the languages of all the peoples are united in the praise of God and harmony is established. But more on this later;[111] meanwhile let us observe the plain wording of the text.

[11:2] And when they removed from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and dwelt in it. It is clear from these words that the first men indeed inhabited the region of the east; and therefore this region should be reckoned as the head of the world, not only because the light of the heavenly bodies arises from there but also because the human race first dwelt in it.

[11:3] And each one said to his neighbour, Come, let us make bricks and bake them with fire. And they had bricks instead of stones and pitch instead of mortar. Perhaps they used bricks instead of stones and pitch instead of mortar, because in those regions they lacked an abundant supply of stones with which to complete so great a work, or because they knew that a wall built of brick is more resistant to the danger of fire. Pitch is made from trees, and also from earth or waters. Hence it is written in what follows about the land of Sodom, *Now the woodland valley had many pits of pitch*,[112] and the *Dead Sea* is called in Greek the *'Lake of Asphalt', that is, of pitch*,[113] because pitch floating on the surface is routinely gathered from it. It seems rather likely that the walls of Babylon were constructed with this material.

[11:4] And they said, Come, let us make a city and a tower, the top of which may reach to heaven. And let us make our name famous before we are scattered abroad into all lands. The phrase 'the top of which' applies not to the city but the tower, that is, the citadel, which they laid out

107 Cf. Acts 2:4.
108 Ps. 76:11 (77:10).
109 Acts 2:5.
110 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Isa. (CCSL 72, 121), etc.
111 *In Gen.* 3.542-709 (below, pp. 233–38).
112 Gen. 14:10.
113 Isidore, *Etym.* 13.19.3-4.

in a higher place above the other fortifications. It is a wonder indeed for what reason they laid out the top of their tower to reach up to heaven and yet declared that they were to be scattered abroad into all lands – unless perhaps they intended in an excess of vanity and pride to scatter themselves throughout the world, so that the tower might please them if perchance they wearied of their earthly dwelling, or at any rate so that if the waters of a flood should again assail the lands, they might seek the upper regions of the air or heaven by its means.

[11:5] And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of Adam were building. Instead of 'the children of Adam' **/154/** the old translation has '*the children of men*', *that is, not the sons of God but* those who, *living according to human standards*,[114] deserved to hear from the Lord, *I have said, You are gods and all of you the sons of the most High. But you like men shall die*.[115] But *God, who is always wholly present everywhere, does not move from place to place; but he is said to come down when he does something on earth which, being done miraculously outside of the usual course of nature, somehow shows his presence. Nor does he who can never be ignorant of anything learn by seeing at a particular moment, but he is said to see and to discover at a particular moment that which he causes to be seen and discovered. Therefore, that city had not yet been seen as God caused it to be seen, when he showed how much it displeased him. However God can be understood to have come down to that city, since his angels in whom he dwells came down. So the words that follow: 'And he said, Behold, it is one people, and all have one tongue',*[116] *and so forth, and then what is added, 'Come, therefore, let us go down, and there confound their tongue',*[117] *are a recapitulation,*[118] *showing how what was said, that is, 'the Lord came down', was done. For if he had already come down, what is the meaning of the words, 'Come, let us go down', which is understood to have been said to the angels, except that he who was coming down in the angels had come down through them?*[119]

[11:6b/c] Behold, he says, **it is one people and all have one tongue; and**

114 Augustine, *DCD* 16.5 (CCSL 48, 506).

115 Ps. 81:6-7 (82:6-7).

116 Gen. 11:6.

117 Gen. 11:7.

118 On 'recapitulation' as a technical term in Biblical commentary, see Eva M. Sanford and William M. Green, eds., Augustine, *The City of God*, LCL 5, 32–33, n. 1. See also Brown, *Bede the Venerable*, p. 50.

119 Augustine, *DCD* 16.5 (CCSL 48, 506).

they have begun to do this, and they will not leave off from their designs until they accomplish them in deed. There is a great difference in sinning between those who disregard the commandments of God and yet have among them some who are zealous and mindful of what is right, and those who with one accord refuse to respect the divine commandments. So too there is a great difference between those who sin, for example, in youth and yet afterwards with the onset of age resolve to do penance for their crimes, and those who manifest no intention of amendment for the evils that they do. In order, therefore, to show the unanimity of the sinners in this passage, the invisible Judge declares, *Behold, it is one people and all have one tongue*, and adds their intention of not repenting, *and they have begun to do this, and they will not leave off from their designs until they accomplish them in deed*. In close agreement **/155/** with this is the beginning of the Thirteenth Psalm where it is said, *The fool said in his heart, There is no God*,[120] that is, Nimrod the contriver of wicked deeds; and then with respect to the framers of the lost city, *They are corrupt, and are become abominable*.[121] Moreover, these words of which we are speaking the inward Judge speaks to his ministering angels in an order incomprehensible to us. To *speak* of this *to* them is to *show his invisible secrets to their hearts, so that they may read in the very contemplation of the Truth whatever they ought to do. For what is revealed to them as viewers is said as if to listeners. Hence, when God would pour into their hearts his notice of vengeance for human pride, he says*,[122]

[11:7a] Come, let us go down and there confound their tongue. *He says 'come' to those who cling to him, because of course this in itself – never to decline from divine contemplation – is always to increase in divine contemplation; and never to recede from the heart is always as it were to 'come' with a kind of steady movement. He also says to them, 'let us go down and there confound their tongue'. The angels go up in that they behold the Creator; the angels go down in that they repress with the ordeal of punishment the creature raising itself up in forbidden acts. Therefore to say, 'let us go down and confound their tongues', is in itself to show them what is rightly to be done, and to reveal by hidden sensations through the strength of their inner vision the judgements to be exhibited to their minds*.[123]

And he rightly does not say, 'Come and go down and confound', but, 'let us confound there their speech', thus showing that he works through his minis-

120 Ps. 13:1 (14:1).
121 Ps. 13:1 (14:1).
122 Gregory, *Moralia* 2.7.9 (CCSL 143, 65).
123 Gregory, *Moralia* 2.7.9 (CCSL 143, 65).

tering angels, in order that they themselves may also be God's co-workers, as the Apostle says, 'for we are labourers together with God'.[124]

[11:7a/b] There let us confound, he says, **their tongue, that they may not understand one another's speech**. *An evil desire is deservedly punished even if it fails in its effect.* Indeed*, since a ruler's power is in his tongue, it is there that his pride was condemned,*[125] *so that the man, who would not understand that he should obey when God gave orders, was not understood when he gave orders to man.*[126]

[11:8-9b] And so the Lord scattered them from that place into all lands, and they ceased to build the city. And therefore the name thereof was called Babel, because there the language of the whole earth was confounded. Language **/156/** was deservedly cast into confusion, because it had wickedly combined into impious speech. The power of language was taken from the proud rulers lest in contempt of God they might be able to teach their subjects the evils that they had begun. And thus the judgement of divine severity was transformed into an aid for the benefit of mankind, in that being silent the rulers ceased from the work that they were perversely engaged in when they were united by speech. And thus, as the Lord went down and saw the city of pride, it came about that it was called Babylon, that is, 'confusion'. But the city of truth has both a name and a condition quite contrary to this; for it is called Jerusalem, that is, 'vision of peace', where the Lord, seeing in spirit the assemblage of the faithful and the humble, sent the grace of the Holy Spirit to confer on them the knowledge of all languages, so that, imbued with these, they might summon all the peoples speaking different languages to the construction with one accord of that holy city, that is, the Church of Christ; and so that they who had humbly applied their hearing to the truth might sublimely open their mouths to preach the knowledge of the truth to the whole world.[127]

Moreover, it should be noted that Scripture indeed says that the building of the city stopped after the builders had been scattered throughout the world; nevertheless it does not say that it ceased to be inhabited. Hence, it seems that it should be inferred that, while others went down from there and ceased from building, Nimrod, the founder of the work, remained in that place with his household and family until with a greater people born from his own lineage he could not only rule more powerfully in this city but also

124 Augustine, *DCD* 16.5 (CCSL 48, 506); 1 Cor. 3:9.
125 Augustine's reference is to Nimrod.
126 Augustine, *DCD* 16.4 (CCSL 48, 505).
127 Cf. Acts 2:4-41.

add other cities to his kingdom. For, unless I am mistaken, these words that were said of him above cannot be otherwise understood, *And the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon and Erech and Accad and Calneh in the land of Shinar*,[128] although in later days Ninus and his wife Semiramis are said in the course of time to have made the same city, Babylonia, greater and more majestic. Hence is that verse of the poet:

> Because in olden times
> Semiramis is said to have girdled the city with walls of brick.[129]

And hence in particular Nebuchadnezzar himself, heaping up its ornaments from the spoils of Jerusalem,[130] said in his pride, *Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built to be the seat of the kingdom by the strength of my power and in the glory of my excellence?*[131] Concerning **/157/** its size and excellence Jerome reports as follows: *Babylon was very powerful, and, situated in a square on a plain, it measured sixteen miles from corner to corner of the wall, that is, sixty-four miles in circumference in all, reports Herodotus and many others who have written histories in Greek. The citadel, moreover, that is, the Capitol, of that city is a tower built after the flood which is said to measure four miles.*[132] Orosius in his *Histories* mentions the same city in this way: *This city is visible in every direction on the level ground of the plain. The nature of the place is very pleasant, with the form of the citadel arranged in a square with ramparts of equal length. The strength and size of its walls are, according to a scarcely credible report, fifty cubits in width, and four times as much in height! Moreover, its perimeter measures four hundred and eighty stadia in circumference.*[133] *The wall is constructed of baked brick and bituminous mortar; a ditch extending wide on the outside encompasses it like a river. In the front of the walls are a hundred bronze gates; with the guardhouses of the defenders being arranged equally on each side in the upper part of the battlements, they are wide enough to admit*

128 Gen. 10:10.

129 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.57-58. *Quod dicitur olim* (for *ubi dicitur altam*) may be the end of Ovid's line 57 in whatever text of Ovid Bede had available to him; Jones takes it as part of Bede's sentence introducing line 58.

130 Cf. Daniel 1:2.

131 Daniel 4:27 (4:30).

132 Jerome, *In Isaiam* 5.14.22-23 (PL 24, 164); *quattuor milia passuum*, Bede; *in altitudine quatuor millia passuum*, Jerome (Bede may have hesitated to repeat the claim that the tower was four miles *high*).

133 One *stadium* = 607 feet (approximate); thus the total extent of the walls is supposed to be something like 55 miles.

four-horse chariots by the gap in their middle. The houses within of four times two storeys are remarkable for their menacing height.[134]

[Spiritual interpretation[135]]

Since truly in the spiritual sense Babylon is the devil's city, that is, the whole condemned human race, who are the builders of Babylon but the instigators of heresies, who either institute the worship of the divine contrary to the Truth or assail the acknowledged faith of the Truth with wicked deeds and words? *And the whole earth was of one tongue and of the same speech*,[136] as long as men remained in the East. But when they directed their feet away from the East, they were soon not only separated from each other but driven further from their Creator because of their words and deeds of pride. The region of the East from whence the world regularly receives light from the rising of the heavenly bodies, properly signifies the very One, who says, *I am the light of the world; he that follows me, walks not in darkness, but shall have the light of life*.[137] As long as men remain in this light, they are of one tongue and of the same speech, because truly the confession of faith is one, and purity of action is the same, as is universal love and the hope of eternal things; because all who are steadfast in Christ are illuminated. But those who retreat from the contemplation of the true light can neither have peace with the Lord **/158/** nor with each other, because there is not one and the same rule of infidelity in the same way as there is one rule of faith. The Lord is one, faith is one, baptism is one, and God is one, in whom is the salvation of the elect; but there are many lords of the wicked, diverse twistings of heresy, diverse wallowing-places of defilements, and diverse gods of the pagans, by which all the wretched are dragged to the one destruction of damnation. The allegorical figure of each city signified this very well, since no one could understand the speech of his neighbour after languages had been separated in Babylon; yet later, in Jerusalem, when languages were united by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the faithful understood even the speech of all the foreigners who had come, and in one bond of love and faith they all praised together the same God and Lord.[138] And having removed *from the East, they found a plain in* which *to dwell*,[139] because,

134 Orosius, *Historiae* 2.6 (CSEL 5, 96–97).
135 Jones's rubric.
136 Gen. 11:1.
137 John 8:12.
138 Cf. Acts 2:5-11.
139 Gen. 11:2.

retreating from the light of justice, the wicked found for themselves the broad highways of the world in which to carry on in their dissolute state of mind – and in this stench of carnal vices, for Shinar, as I have said, means 'the stench of them'.[140] And what is expressed by the land of Shinar except the putrid desire of carnal folly? All those who fail to avoid dwelling in it, that is, to avoid abiding in it heedlessly and with fixed purpose, soon stir up their neighbours as well, as their depravity increases, to abuse of the Creator and wicked deeds. For it follows that *each one said to his neighbour, Come, let us make bricks for ourselves, and bake them with fire*.[141] Therefore each encourages the other to make bricks with which to build Nimrod's city[142] in the plain of Shinar, because the whole multitude of the wicked serves the devil with their muddy, dirty, and earthly deeds; and the city they build for him by living wickedly is none other than themselves. But in contrast the city of Jerusalem, where reigns David, that is, 'strong of hand', and Solomon, 'peacemaker',[143] is constructed not of brick but of stone, and not in the plain but on the mountain, even as its King says to it,[144] *Behold I will lay your stones in order, and I will lay your foundations with sapphires*,[145] and concerning which the Prophet says, *Mount Zion, on the side of the north, the city of the great king*.[146] Because plainly the city of the devil, exiles indeed, sinners, and tyrants, which is what the name Nimrod means,[147] that **/159/** is, the whole multitude of the wicked, wanders about like a vagabond through the dissolute corruption of the present life. But the Church, truly the city of Christ, is built of living stones, that is, souls strong in faith and deed, such as its wise Architect was speaking of when he said of its King, *Unto whom coming, as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen and made honourable by God; you also as living stones are built up*.[148] And not in this plain of Shinar but in the sacred mountain of the Lord, because the

140 *In Gen.* 3.320 (above, p. 226).

141 Gen. 11:3.

142 Bede understands Babel to be a tower in Babylon, the city founded by Nimrod: *In Gen.* 3.120-21 (above, p. 219).

143 Cf. Isidore, *Etym.* 7.6.64-65.

144 Reading *ad eam* for *ad eum*, all MSS and editions. In Isaiah the passage quoted is addressed to a woman who personifies the desolate people of Israel. As Bede uses it, it is addressed to *ciuitas Hierusalem* (fem.), the allegorical figure of the Church. Hence, emendation seems necessary.

145 Isa. 54:11.

146 Ps. 47:3 (48:2).

147 See *In Gen.* 3.134-36 (above, p. 219).

148 1 Peter 2:4-5.

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elect exert themselves, not to relax in the basest pleasures of carnal things, but rather to rule themselves and raise themselves up to a desire for heavenly things. Hence it is said that *our conversation is in heaven*.[149] Moreover, the mud that they make into bricks, which[150] are usually made in a square with equal sides from which they derive their name,[151] signifies the composition and ornamentation of secular eloquence, whether in fallacious philosophy or in heretical subtlety, by means of which the devil's proud city seems to be erected for a great while, but in the scales of the strict Judge it will be revealed how damnable and worthy of destruction it is. They baked the bricks that they made with fire,[152] clearly that fire of which it was said, *They are all adulterating, like an oven*, their hearts,[153] and of which Isaiah said, *Behold all you that kindle a fire, encompassed with flames, walk in the light of your fire, and in the flames which you have kindled*.[154] That fire is indeed the love of vices and the desire for mankind's applause, by means of which fatuous teachers of the duped attempt to strengthen the dogmas of false doctrine once they have been found and to harden them to such an extent that they cannot be overcome by any argument of divine truth and doctrine. But nevertheless, as Scripture says, under the conquering forces of the truth, *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen*,[155] truly in a double fall, since it is not only cast down in the present[156] by the revelation of the truth but it will also be damned in the future by the judgement of the final severity. The people of Israel once made cities of this kind from mud and brick in Egypt,[157] since not only were they subject to vices and heresies, at a time when they had not yet been instructed by the word of the Law, but they also prefigured in their deeds those who, being even now subjected to the dark commands of the foul spirits, by whom they are still subjected to the harsh commands of

149 Philipp. 3:20.

150 Reading *qui* for *quae*, all MSS and editions. The word for 'bricks' (*lateres*) is unambiguously masculine.

151 Bede derives *later*, *lateris*, 'brick', from the noun *latus*, *lateris*, 'side'; Isidore (*Etym*. 19.10.16) derives it from the adjective *latus*, 'broad'.

152 Cf. Gen. 11:3.

153 Hosea 7:4; and cf. 7:6.

154 Isa. 50:11.

155 Rev. 18:2.

156 NB, *praesens* here has the sense of 'the time of life on earth' as opposed to *futurus*, 'the time after Last Judgement'. This may be relevant to the impression one gets that the medievals conceived historical time somewhat differently from our modern sense of it. That is, though time has a beginning and an end and is divided into 'ages', it somehow lacks depth.

157 Cf. Exod. 1.14; Judith 5.10.

the Egyptians, have learned to have no faith or hope of gaining the heavenly fatherland, **/160/** and therefore only know how to adhere and be subjected to the enticements of this world.

Because it was taken from the earth or from pits, pitch, which the builders of Babylon used for mortar,[158] certainly signifies concentration upon earthly and base pleasure, with which the men of this age build all their works, inasmuch as, with no hope or knowledge of heavenly blessings, they block themselves from seeking those joys which are in heaven, and therefore everything that they do they do for the sake of temporal delight or applause. In contrast to this, we read that masons [*caementarii*] fittingly made the temple of the Lord.[159] Mortar [*caementum*] of course is made from stones burned and reduced to ash, by which it is produced from the fire, so that the stones, which individually and separately had previously been firm and strong, softened after a short time with the addition of a brilliant whiteness, and better bound together by the infusion of water, can even bind other stones placed in the wall, while they themselves not long afterwards also gain better strength than they seemed for a short time to have lost. Who therefore ought to be understood by 'mortar' but those who, smelted zealously in the furnace of temporal tribulations, previously exchanged within themselves all the darkness of vices for the bright lustre of virtues, saying to their Creator, *you will wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow*?[160] Then they also take pains to make their neighbours white and pure by their exhortations and examples and to bind them mutually with the tie of love. Of these it may rightly be said, *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God*.[161] They are those who, the more they are softened into humility by the flame of tribulations, the stronger they prove to be in strengthening and preserving the hearts of their neighbours in their tribulations. Because even the temple is constructed of white stone, as David said to Solomon when he gave him the expenses and showed him the measurements of the temple to be built.[162] But of course he also prepared '*marble of Paros in great abundance*',[163] because the Church of Christ is assembled from the souls of the elect, strong in faith and gleaming in action. Indeed, the marble of the island of Paros is known to be of great

158 Cf. Gen. 11:3.
159 Cf. 1 Kings/3 Kings 5:18.
160 Ps. 50:9 (51:7).
161 Matt. 5:9.
162 Cf. 1 Chron./1 Para. 28:9–29:2.
163 1 Chron./1 Para. 29:2.

excellence and shining white in colour.[164] But the builders of Babylon, lacking an abundance of, and skill with, this material, cement their bricks with pitch from pits, because they are attempting to build the whiteness of innocence, the strength of faith, and the harmony of brotherhood, with the **/161/** argumentative tricks of disputation.

Come, it says, *let us make a city and a tower, the top of which may reach to heaven*.[165] Wicked teachers make a city for themselves whenever they form their own heretical assemblies, after abandoning the heavenly city, that is, the holy Church, whose architect and builder is God. All the wicked make a city for themselves whenever, ignoring the protection of God's commandments, they follow the feelings and desires of their own heart in doing or saying whatever they please. They build the city of Babylon whenever they do shameful deeds. And they also make *a tower, the top of which may reach to heaven* whenever they make use of impious words in an affront to their Creator, whenever they speak, in the words of the Psalmist, *iniquity to the Highest*,[166] and whenever they *set their mouth against heaven*.[167] Pagans do this by worshipping many gods, heretics by defiling the faith of the one God with heresies, Jews by denying Christ the Son of God, and false Catholics by profaning the correct faith with wicked deeds and schisms, to all of whom that verse of the Psalmist to the Lord applies, *the pride of them that hate you ascends continually*[168] – to you, that is, into the record of your just Judgement. And with the pride of the depraved ascending to heaven like the top of the abominable tower, it is just and right that the descending Creator of heaven destroy the concerted undertakings of the wicked, and confer this favour on them, first, lest, their forces being strong enough to complete what they had begun, they be condemned more severely forever, and second, in order that, disagreeing even among themselves after the harmful conspiracy had been rent asunder, they not harm the good at all. And the Lord, descending from heaven, did this once by himself; he does this daily by his preachers in the Church. For he *confound*ed *the tongue* of the prideful Jews, all of whom with unanimous agreement and as if in *one*

164 Cf. Isidore, *Etym*. 16.5.8. The alliteration (including vocalic alliteration in the Germanic poetic sense) in these phrases is striking: *quia nimirum* ***e****cclesia* ***Ch****risti de* ***f****ortibus* ***f****ide et* ***a****ctione* ***f****ulgidis* ***a****nimabus* ***c****olligitur* ***e****lectorum. Marmor quippe* ***i****nsulae Pariae* ***u****alidae* ***u****irtutis et* ***c****andidi esse* ***c****oloris*.

165 Gen. 11:4.

166 Ps. 72:8 (73:8).

167 Ps. 72:9 (73:9).

168 Ps. 73:23 (74:23).

tongue[169] rebel against the blessing of the gospel which he was preaching; and, hindering them from their wicked efforts, he scattered them throughout the whole world. He casts down and divides the tongues of the heretics by catholic teachers and, separating them from each other, lest they be able to erect the gates of hell against his Church, he holds them in check. For there is no heresy which may not be attacked by other heretics, no school of worldly philosophy which may not be refuted by other equally foolish schools of the philosophy of falsehood. **/162/** And thus it happens that, as long as the wicked have languages that are mutually confounded, so that no one recognizes the speech of his neighbour, that is, by understanding it, they not only show that the name of Babylon, that is, 'confusion', is appropriate for themselves, but they also fail entirely to injure the 'vision of peace'[170] in which the Church glories. For it is certain that the more worthless teachers and evildoers are separated from each other by differences of belief, the more they allow an opportunity for the Church to be united.

[End of the spiritual interpretation
of the tower of Babylon]

[11:10] These are the generations of Shem: Shem was a hundred years old when he begot Arpachshad, two years after the flood. After the destruction of the building of Babylon, Scripture moves swiftly, with the enumeration of the generations of the second age of the world (the first age went as far as Noah and the flood), to arrive at Abraham, the patriarch of the third age, or more precisely of all peoples. By his faith and obedience a new foundation of the holy city was again laid, and in his offspring the scattering of the peoples was restored to one confession and faith of divine worship. And because the number one hundred, which is made by passing from the left hand to the right,[171] customarily signifies a great perfection either of good works or of hope or of eternal life, it is fitting that Shem, the son of the blessing,[172] begot a son in the hundredth year of his life, whose descendants extended from Eber on to Abraham. And Abraham himself, for the sake of the same sacramental meaning, in the hundredth year of his life begot Isaac, the son of promise,[173] in remembrance of whom we are made

169 Cf. Gen. 11:6-7.
170 I.e., Jerusalem.
171 This refers to the system of finger calculation. See above, p. 173, n. 184.
172 Cf. Augustine, *DCD* 16.9 (CCSL 48, 510–11).
173 For Isaac as the 'son of promise', see *In Gen.* 3.880-84 (below, p. 243, and n. 197).

the children of promise.[174] Being placed, as it were, for the time being on the right hand of our Judge by hope, we hope for the blessing of eternal life by our good works. For the two sons, whom Shem begot before his hundredth year, Elam and Asshur, as was gone over above,[175] being placed outside of the sacred seed and still held, as it were, in the left hand, created from themselves the citizens of the still more earthly city, that is, of this world. The one, indeed, was the ancestor of the Elamites, that is, the Persians; the other of the Assyrians.

But for me an important question arises concerning the literal level. How is it that Shem is said to be a hundred years old in the second year after the flood, when he is asserted earlier to have been born in the five-hundredth year of Noah,[176] and the flood is stated to have come in the six-hundredth year of the same Noah?[177] For if he was born **/163/** in the five-hundredth year of his father, since his father was six hundred years old when the flood came, he himself was certainly a hundred years old, and accordingly in the second year after the flood he was one hundred and two years of age. Therefore, in order to avoid an inconsistency in the reckoning of the times, it must be understood either that Noah was two years more than five hundred when Shem was born, or that he was two years less than six hundred when the flood came, or that Shem was one hundred and two when Arpachshad was born. For Scripture usually speaks in such a way that, although a small amount may be left over or lacking, it nevertheless gives a full and complete number for the total.[178] And it seems most probable, as far as I can see, that when Shem was born, Noah was five hundred and two years old; for Scripture was not wrong to say that he was five hundred years old, even though he was five hundred and two, because of course the lesser number is contained in the greater. For Scripture itself signified that it was speaking very freely

174 Gal. 4:28.

175 *In Gen.* 3.160-72 and 3.237-42 (above, pp. 220 and 223).

176 Cf. Gen. 5:31.

177 Cf. Gen. 7:6.

178 In the Preface to his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, the earliest of his biblical commentaries, Bede recapitulates the seven rules of Tyconius from the latter's Apocalypse Commentary. The fifth rule asserts the preference in the Bible for the use of whole and perfect numbers to express by synecdoche (the whole for the part or the part for the whole) allegorical meanings (see *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Praefatio 75-95 [CCSL 121A, 227–29]). Here, however, Bede's concern is with the literal sense – he wants to show that the statement in the Bible is not factually untrue, even if it is incomplete. On Bede's use of Tyconius in general and its importance, see Bonner, 'Saint Bede', pp. 3–15 (*BHW*, pp. 157–69); Mackay, 'Bede's Biblical Criticism', *passim*.

in that passage, when it said that Noah at age five hundred begot three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, although there is no doubt that one man cannot beget three sons from one wife in one and the same year. Possibly, therefore, the author[179] of the sacred narrative took pains to explain this more carefully in this passage, by saying that Shem was a hundred years old in the second year after the flood, because he remembered that he had noted the year of his birth rather carelessly as it were.

[11:11] And Shem lived after he begot Arpachshad five hundred years and begot sons and daughters. Nowhere in all this series of generations is the phrase 'and he died' added, as it was in the age that preceded the flood, because there was no one in all this complex of births of whom it could be said when singled out from the rest, as it was said there of Enoch, *And he walked with God and was seen no more, because God took him*.[180]

[11:12] And Arpachshad lived thirty-five years and begot Shelah. In this passage the Seventy Translators put one generation more than the Hebrew Truth, saying that Arpachshad, when he was a hundred and thirty-five years of age, begot Kenan, who, when he was a hundred and thirty years of age, himself begot Shelah (the evangelist Luke seems to have followed their translation **/164/** in this passage).[181] Indeed, the Greek chronographers,[182] knowing of this discrepancy, corrected the series of generations in accordance with Hebrew authority by removing Kenan. Nevertheless, they did not trouble to correct by the same authority the number of years in the generations that they had in common with the Hebrew texts, but following their own authority they gave to this age, which extends from the flood to Abraham, a sum total of years a hundred and thirty years less than the edition of the Seventy Translators, but six hundred and fifty years more than the Hebrew Truth.[183]

[11:14] Shelah also lived thirty years and begot Eber. The Seventy Translators have a hundred and thirty.

[11:16] And Eber lived thirty-four years and begot Peleg. The Seventy Translators have a hundred and thirty-four.

179 I.e., Moses.

180 Gen. 5:24.

181 Cf. Luke 3:35-36.

182 Jones instances Africanus and Hippolytus Romanus, but the chronographer Bede chiefly has in mind is Eusebius, as he makes clear in *Epistola ad Pleguinam* 3.36-42 (CCSL 123C, 618).

183 Bede reproduces this paragraph nearly verbatim in *DTR* 66.161-75 (CCSL 123B, 468); cf. *Epistola ad Pleguinam* 6 (CCSL 123C, 629–30).

[11:18] And Peleg lived thirty years and begot Reu. The Seventy Translators have a hundred and thirty.
[11:20] And Reu lived thirty-two years and begot Serug. The Seventy Translators have a hundred and thirty-two.
[11:22] And Serug lived thirty years and begot Nahor. The Seventy Translators have a hundred and thirty.
[11:24] And Nahor lived twenty-nine years and begot Terah. The Seventy Translators have seventy-nine.
[11:26] And Terah lived seventy years and begot Abram and Nahor and Haran. In this generation alone the Seventy Translators do not differ at all from the Hebrew Truth. And the second age of the world extends up to this point, having according to the Hebrew Truth two hundred and ninety-two years, according to the Seventy Translators one thousand and seventy-two years, and according to the teachings of the chronographers nine hundred and forty-two years. And so it says that when Terah had lived seventy years, he begot Abram and Nahor and Haran, just as before the flood Noah is said to have begot three sons when he was five hundred years old, although one man could not have begot three sons from one wife in one year. **/165/** For it is understood that when he was seventy years old he begot Abram, who is now called Abraham, and then his brothers at a later time. But Scripture did not bother to express the time of their birth, since only the record of the time when Abraham was born expressed and could be adequate to the significance of that age.
[11:27a/b] These are the generations of Terah: Terah begot Abram and Nahor and Haran. *The house of Terah, of whom Abram was born, was the only one in which the worship of the one true God had survived, and, very probably, the Hebrew language also, although Joshua reports that Terah himself served strange gods in Mesopotamia,*[184] *just as even more evidently the people of God did in Egypt. The other descendants of Eber gradually disappeared into other languages and other nations. Similarly, just as only the house of Noah had survived the flood of waters for the renewal of mankind, so amidst the flood of numerous superstitions throughout the entire world, only the house of Terah had survived in which was preserved the seed of the city of God. Finally, just as there, after reckoning the generations down to Noah together with the number of years, and after explaining the cause of the flood, before God begins to speak to Noah about building the ark, Scripture says, 'These are the generations of Noah',*[185] *so here likewise,*

184 Cf. Josh. 24:2.
185 Gen. 6:9.

after reckoning the generations from Shem, Noah's son, down to Abram, a significant division of time is similarly indicated, when Scripture says, 'These are the generations of Terah: Terah begot Abram and Nahor and Haran'.[186] Since the patriarch of the second age[187] was born there, the patriarch of the third age[188] was born here.

[11:27c-28] And Haran begot Lot. And Haran died before Terah his father in the land of his nativity in Ur of the Chaldees. The phrase *before Terah* can refer both to presence and to time – to time, of course, because he died before his father did; and to presence because he passed away before him, that is, in his presence. Accordingly, some texts have it that *he died in the sight of Terah his father*.[189] And as for *in Ur of the Chaldees*, this seems to be the name of the place where he was buried. His tomb is pointed out today, as Josephus reports;[190] this would suggest that this same Haran was **/166/** a man of some great excellence and worth. And because in Hebrew Ur means 'fire', it is said that he was destroyed by the fire of the Chaldees, because, knowing the true God as he did along with Abram his older brother, he refused to worship the fire which they worshipped. And therefore when they were both thrown into the fire by the Chaldees, he was consumed by the flames, but Abram was delivered by the Lord on account of his loftier faith. Hence, the Lord later says to him, *I am the Lord, who brought you out from the fire of the Chaldees*.[191] And on account of this schism, although Abram escaped the fire, he was nevertheless unable to live among the Chaldeans; but with his family he was removed by his father into another land.[192] These things are corroborated by the words of Achior, the leader of all the Moabites and Ammonites, who, as a prominent person, could not be ignorant of the things that had been done among a neighbouring people and one related to his own, or I should rather say one from which he himself derived; for, speaking of the people of Israel to Holofernes, the general of the army of the Assyrians, he says: *This people is of the offspring of the Chaldeans. They dwelt first in Mesopotamia, because they would not follow the gods of their fathers, who were in the land of the Chaldeans. Wherefore forsaking the ceremonies of their fathers, which consisted in the worship of many gods,*

186 Augustine, *DCD* 16.12 (CCSL 48, 516).
187 I.e., Noah.
188 I.e., Abraham.
189 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 11.28 (CCSL 72, 15).
190 Cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 1.6.5.
191 Gen. 15:7.
192 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 11.28 (CCSL 72, 15).

they worshipped one God of heaven, who also commanded them to depart from thence and to dwell in Haran.[193]

[11:29] And Abram and Nahor married wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, father of Milcah, and father of Iscah. My predecessors say that this Iscah was Sarai, the wife of Abram, because the full brothers Abram and Nahor had as wives two sisters, the daughters of Haran.[194] If this is so, the Haran who was the younger brother of Abram and Nahor cannot be understood to be the father of these same women, but another man of the same name. For it is a fact that Abram was only ten years older than his wife Sarai, since he said in the presence of the Lord, *Shall a son, think you, be born to him that is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah that is ninety years old bring forth a son?*[195] Then how could his brother Haran, who was his junior by seven or not more than eight years, have a daughter who was ten years younger than him?[196] **/167/**

[11:30] *And Sarai was barren, and had no children*. By the wisdom of divine providence it came about that she was barren in youth in order that, bearing the son of promise[197] in old age, she might reveal a type of the holy Church, with respect to which it is said, *Rejoice, you barren who bear not*, etc.[198] For it was fitting that she who was going to bear the one son of promise as an allegorical figure of our unique faith and hope should bear him, not in Chaldea, not in Mesopotamia, but in the Promised Land.

[11:31a/c] And Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, the wife of Abram his son, and brought them out of Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan. The old translation reads, *He brought them out of the land of the Chaldeans*,[199]

193 Judith 5:6-9.

194 Cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 1.6.5; Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 11.29 (CCSL 72, 15); Augustine, *DCD* 16.12 (CCSL 48, 516).

195 Gen. 17:17.

196 Bede's logic is impeccable, although I have been unable to discover the basis for his assertion that Haran was exactly seven or eight years younger than his brother Abram. Augustine (*Quaestiones* 1.25.2 [CCSL 33, 9]) offers the suggestion that Abraham might have been named first, not because he was the eldest of the three sons, but because he was the greatest in merit, although the youngest. But he does not repeat this argument in the *City of God*, nor does Bede take it up.

197 Bede's 'son of promise' looks forward to Paul's words in Galatians 4:28 (and similarly in Rom. 9:7-8): 'Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise'.

198 Gal. 4:27.

199 As in Augustine, *DCD* 16.13 (CCSL 48, 516).

which doesn't raise any issue. But the fact that it says according to the Hebrew Truth, *he brought them out of Ur*, that is, out of the fire or conflagration of the Chaldeans, can rightly be understood as meaning that he brought them from that land where fire was worshipped in lieu of stating, 'he brought them from the idolatry of the Chaldeans'. And the phrase, *to go into the land of Canaan*, is immediately followed by:

[11:31d-32] And they came as far as Haran and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and he died in Haran. This shows that it was indeed Terah's intention, when he fled from the Chaldeans, to go into the land of Canaan. But when, upon reaching Haran, he found a home in it suitable for himself and his family and safe from the pursuit of the Chaldeans, he gave over wandering any longer to see the land of Canaan. Instead he lived in the city to which he had come until his death, so that, even when his son Abram and his nephew Lot departed from there at the command of the Lord, he did not trouble to set foot outside of it. For the fact, as it is stated, that he died in that same place when he was two hundred and five years of age, is known to have happened a long time after their departure, because Abram, who was born when his father was seventy, was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran, which gives a total of a hundred and forty-five years. Therefore, he went out from Haran **/168/** when his father was that age, which is to say, sixty years before the latter's death.[200] But by taking up the death of Terah before the departure of Abram Scripture connected it with his arrival and dwelling in Haran in order subsequently to have an unrestricted opportunity to tell the story of Abram and Lot from the beginning.

Haran, moreover, is *a city of Mesopotamia across from Edessa, which up to the present is called Charra*, famed among the Romans for the destruction of the consul Crassus,[201] and among Christians, as the dwelling-place of the patriarchs. It is also referred to in the book of the holy father Tobias, where it was distinguished by the hospitality of the archangel Raphael.[202]

[12:1-2] And the Lord said to Abram, Go forth out of your country and from your kindred and out of your father's house, and come into the land which I shall show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and magnify your name, and you shall be blessed. Since the Lord speaks distinctly of 'country', 'kindred', and 'father's house', Abram's

200 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 12.4 (CCSL 72, 15); Augustine, *DCD* 16.15 (CCSL 48, 518); Augustine, *Quaestiones* 1.15.1 (CCSL 33, 8).

201 Jerome, *De situ*, s.v. 'Charran' (PL 23, 888).

202 Cf. Tobit 11.

'country' must be understood as being in the land of the Chaldeans, from whence he had withdrawn; his 'kindred', his brother Nahor and his family, which he had already left; his 'father's house', the house in which he was then staying in Haran. How therefore is it possible that at that time he is now ordered to go out, not only from his father's house, but also from his country and from his kindred, from which he seemed already to have gone out? Unless, as I already mentioned above,[203] it is perhaps to be understood that he went out from his country and his kindred with his father with the intention of returning to it in due course after the Chaldeans had been appeased. Now he is ordered by the Lord to set aside his intention of returning to Chaldea and to remove himself both mentally and physically from dwelling in Mesopotamia, so that, after leaving the country in which the city of pride was built and destroyed by the judgement of the Lord, he might come into the land in which he was to receive the grace of the divine blessing, and beget as the reward of his faith and obedience a new and better progeny. For God's words, *and I will make of you a great nation*, properly pertain to the people of Israel. For he later says to him, in reference to the begetting of the other nations which were also going to arise from him, namely, the Ishmaelites, the Idumeans, and the peoples who were going to be born from Keturah, **/169/** his second wife after Sarah,[204] *And I will make you increase exceedingly, and I will make nations of you*.[205]

[12:3b] And in you shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. This promise of blessing is greater and more excellent by far. For the former is earthly,[206] but this is divine, because clearly that one signifies the carnal propagation of Israel, but this the spiritual; that, the propagation of his people who were born from him according to the flesh, but this the propagation of his people from all the kindreds of earth who are saved in Christ.[207] Among these are also all of those who were born from him according to the flesh and yet desired to imitate the piety of his faith. To all of them the apostle Paul says, *And if you are Christ's, then you are the seed of Abraham*.[208] Therefore the fact that it says, *And in you shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed*, is just as if it had said, 'and in your seed the families of earth will be blessed'. For Mary, from whom Christ was to be born, was

203 *In Gen.* 3.888-909 (above, pp. 243–44).
204 Cf. Gen. 25:1-4.
205 Gen. 17:6.
206 The reference is to God's promise in Gen. 12:2.
207 Cf. Gal. 3:8.
208 Gal. 3:29.

already, to borrow the words of the Apostle, in *the loins of Abraham*,[209] when these things were said to him. And what a wonderful arrangement of divine severity and compassion! For when men assembled in order to build that work of pride, most of them deserved to be divided from one another by different languages and kindreds, but one man, who left that province and willingly went into exile at the command of the Lord, heard that all the nations, which had been divided in various provinces and languages, were to be gathered together again in himself by a universal blessing.

It should certainly be noted that although the third age of the world is usually counted from the birth of Abraham, nevertheless the beginning of the third age was consecrated by this declaration of the Lord to Abram following this particular confluence of sufficient events, since it was then that the sacred seed was set apart from the nations, and the Saviour of all the peoples who was to be born from it was foretold. For up to this time all the faithful and the just possessed that knowledge of the moral life, which they either knew from the guidance of nature or derived originally from the teaching of their parents. But now they also had knowledge through the agency of the Saviour who was to come in the flesh, in whom was to come blessing and salvation to all the saints, that is to say, both to those who were born before his Incarnation, and to us who were born afterwards. *Through* the name of that same *Lord Jesus*, as Peter says, *we believe we are to be saved, in like manner as they also*.[210] **/170/**

[12:4] So Abram went out as the Lord had commanded him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he went forth from Haran. The age of Abram makes it clear that he went out from Haran when his father was still living, as was explained above.[211] And it cannot be doubted that seventy-five years is a mystical number, since in that number he not only received the promise of divine blessing himself, but also, when he died, he left his son Isaac as the heir of the same blessing.[212] Concerning that number, let me briefly just say that since seventy is seven times ten, it signifies the perfection of good action, in that we perform the mandates of the Ten Commandments by the grace of the holy Spirit, which is described by the Prophet as sevenfold.[213] To this is added the number five, in order that

209 Hebr. 7:5.

210 Acts 15:11.

211 *In Gen.* 3.914-15 (above, p. 244).

212 Abraham was a hundred and *seventy-five* years old when he died (Gen. 25:7), and afterwards God promised to fulfil his oath to Abraham in Isaac (Gen. 26:3).

213 Cf. Isa. 11:2-3; *In Gen.* 2.1461-63 (above, p. 184).

we perform the same divine commands, aided by the grace of the Spirit, in all the senses of our body. Abram was seventy-five years old when he went out from Haran and entered the Promised Land at the command and in consequence of the promises of the Lord, so that, after the heretical way of life of Babylon had been cursed, it might be made known that he observed the commands of God with the help of the Spirit – and that in all that he did, whether living, hearing, tasting, or touching, there was nothing whatever in his body that he might not devote to the obedience of the divine commands after he had been illuminated and aided by the gift of the Spirit itself, and that he also signified to all the same heirs of the promise that they were to conduct their lives in like fashion. For it is certain that the fact that he went out from his country and from his kindred and from the house of his father when he was commanded to do so[214] should be imitated by all the sons of that promise, among whom we too are included. Certainly we go out from our country when we renounce the pleasures of the flesh, from our kindred when we strive to strip ourselves of all the vices with which we were born (insofar as this is possible for men!), and from the house of our father when we struggle out of love for the heavenly life to abandon this world with its prince the devil. For we are all born into the world as sons of the devil on account of the sin of the first transgression; but by the grace of rebirth all of us who belong to the seed of Abraham are made the sons of God, just as our Father who is in heaven says to us, **/171/** that is, to his Church, *Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline your ear, and forget your people and your father's house*.[215]

Hence, Haran, from which Abram went out, is properly translated 'wrath'; Canaan, to whose country he is summoned, means 'moved' or 'tradesman'.[216] Therefore, Abram did not go out alone with his brother Lot from Haran to come into the land of Canaan, but all the elect who have been born in the baptism of rebirth truly go out from Haran also and come into the land of Canaan. But also all the elect, when they [appease?][217] the wrath of the first sin in the state of their own lives by renouncing the habit of the vices, apply themselves to the virtues, and pursue the most blessed trade through temporal labours in order to obtain eternal rewards. They despise earthly wealth so that they may receive heavenly wealth. They scorn the joys of the human realm to merit having part in the kingdom of God. For this

214 Cf. Gen. 12:1.
215 Ps. 44:11 (45:10).
216 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 63); *In Gen.* 2.2382-83 (above, p. 213).
217 A verb appears to be missing from the text.

is the land which the Lord promised that he would show to his followers, because the path of good works by which we should advance cannot be sought out by the cleverness of human wisdom, but his leadership must be sought in all things, to whom the Psalmist says, *You have held me by my right hand and by your will you have conducted me and with your glory you have received me*.[218]

[12:5a/d] And so he took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son and all the substance which they had gathered and the souls which they had made in Haran, and they went out to go into the land of Canaan. The phrase *the souls which they had made* is used in place of 'the children whom they had begot'. For in the Scriptures a human being is sometimes indicated by the word 'soul' alone and at other times by the word 'flesh' alone. By the word 'soul', for example, when it is said, *The soul that sins, the same shall die*;[219] by the word 'flesh', as in the Psalm, *all flesh shall come to you*,[220] since flesh cannot come to God without the soul nor can the soul sin without flesh, but the whole person is signified by the one part.[221] Nor do those who think that just as flesh is begot from flesh, so soul is begot from soul, derive any help from this sentence, since, as I have said, the whole person is designated by the word 'soul'. And it should be understood that it was not Abram and Lot who 'made' souls, that is, begot souls in Haran, **/172/** but their families and servants; for the sequel of the sacred narrative attests that the patriarchs themselves still remained without children.

[12:5e-7] And when they were come into it, Abram passed through the country into the place of Shechem as far as the noble valley.[222] Now the Canaanite was at that time in the land. And the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, To your seed will I give this land. And he built there an altar to the Lord. We read above that the Lord addressed Abram who was still lingering in Haran and ordered him, with the promise of a manifold blessing, to go out from there and to come into the land which he

218 Ps. 72:24 (73:23-24).

219 Ezek. 18:20.

220 Ps. 64:3 (65:2).

221 This is one of the definitions of synecdoche. Cf. Bede, *DST* 2.2.85-87 (CCSL 123A, 156–57).

222 The Douay-Rheims translation of *conuallem inlustrem* is 'noble vale'. It may, however, have been meant to be understood as a proper name. *Inlustrem* is capitalized by Jones and in Weber/Gryson. In KJV, the corresponding phrase is translated 'unto the plain of Moreh'; in Alter, 'in the Terebinth of Moreh'; in Speiser, 'by the terebinth of Moreh'. The terebinth is a Mediterranean tree. Speiser (p. 86, n. 6) suggests that some translators may have wanted 'to avoid the pagan implications of a sacred tree'.

showed him.[223] When he did this and willingly obeyed the divine commands, he immediately became worthy of the greater favour of God, so that he merited enjoying not only his direct address, as before, but also the sight of him. When he realized from this vision and divine address that this was the land which God had promised that he would possess, as a man devoted to God he took care to dedicate and consecrate it without delay by setting up an altar to him for the sake of offering him sacrificial victims.

And since the sacred narrative is full of allegorical mysteries, it should be noted that this appearance of the Lord and erection of an altar is said to have occurred in the *place of Shechem* and in the *noble valley*. What figurative meaning is to be understood for 'noble valley' other than humility?[224] We who have been called from the labours and burdens of this world must consider this to be first among the virtues, as he himself says, *Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light*.[225] The *place of Shechem* corresponds mystically to the carrying of this burden, because it is named together with the *noble valley*. Indeed Shechem is translated in Latin as *humeri*, 'shoulders',[226] because it is fitting for us to take up the burden of good works that we ought to carry with humility [*humilitas*] of mind. Whenever we take particular care to do this, we will immediately merit receiving the grace of the Lord's presence and consolation, so that little by little we may be able to climb to the higher steps of the virtues. Hence, concerning the progressive stages of Abram's journeys, which signify the benefits of good works, it is rightly added: **/173/**

[12:8] And passing on from thence to a mountain that was on the east side of Bethel, he there pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. He built there also an altar to the Lord and called upon his name. After the valley he climbed into mountainous country, because by the humility of our own despised state we should ascend to the sublime height of action devoted to God. And there also, just as in the valley, he built an altar to the Lord and called upon his name, because whether we are humbled in the sight of the Lord or whether we do lofty deeds of virtue, either is a gift of divine favour. For either we should offer him praises for

223 Cf. Gen. 12:1-2.

224 Cf. Augustine, *Enarrationes* 103.2.10 (PL 37, 1356). The comments that follow suggest that Bede equates 'noble valley' in particular with the monastic enclosure. See Introduction, pp. 39–40.

225 Matt. 11:29-30.

226 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 71).

his graces. And because progress in the virtues should always be toward the higher, it is fittingly added:

[12:9] And Abram went forward, going and proceeding on to the south. Truly the southern region, from which the sun, burning more brightly, habitually lights up the world, mystically signifies the ardour of love, whereby the hearts of the elect are enflamed with the *Sun of justice*,[227] namely Christ, always shining down from above, lest amid the appetite and desire for the lowest things they become slothful. And so Abram, wishing to see and to know the land that he was to take into his possession, *went forward* with human curiosity, *going and proceeding on to the south*. But on the mystical level he taught that, ascending *from virtue to virtue*, he was always, like all the elect, striving for the uninterrupted benefit of divine love, until it might be granted for him to see *the God of gods in Zion*.[228]

[12:10a/b] And there came a famine in the country, and Abram went down into Egypt to go into exile there. After receiving promises of blessing, entering the Promised Land, building in it an altar to the Lord, and calling upon his name, Abram is tested by famine, and by so great a famine that on account of it, as soon as he saw and entered the land which he had received according to the promise, he abandoned it. But Isaac also, and Jacob as well, and his sons, driven by the same necessity, abandoned the same Promised Land, and, as the Psalmist sings, *they passed from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people*.[229] We must give absolute credence to the fact that this happened not by chance but by divine providence, namely so that not only **/174/** they themselves but all the heirs of the same promise might understand that they received the gift of the divine blessing. Thus, although in this life they would have to endure temporal toil and suffering, nevertheless in the life to come they could expect eternal rest and blessedness. And by this means it was also given to be understood that Abram and his offspring were promised possession of the land of Canaan, so as better to signify the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, of which it is written, *But the just shall inherit the land, and shall dwell therein for evermore*.[230] The fact is that this was not said of the land of this world, which is common to the just and the unjust, since it speaks of a land to be possessed both for evermore and by the just. Therefore the land of Canaan is promised to Abram and his offspring, and after the long labour of Egyptian servitude

227 Malach. 4:2
228 Ps. 83:8 (84:7).
229 Ps. 104:13 (105:13).
230 Ps. 36:29 (37:29).

it is restored under the leadership of Joshua [*Iesus*],[231] in order to make known mystically that the heavenly fatherland promised to us long ago is to be restored after the suffering of our present exile by our Lord Jesus Christ. But also in that land of Canaan the children of promise never ceased from labouring and struggling against their enemies, in order that they might understand, as I stated before, that they should seek by preference another country after this one, in which they might truly enjoy heavenly blessing and eternal rest. Even the fact that Abram fell into danger on account of his wife while wandering in exile in Egypt was certainly appropriate to this arrangement of divine providence, but lest he suffer harm, aid came to the endangered man by means of divine protection. Thus it was plainly revealed not only that the just would endure in this life the universal evils of the world, such as famine, plagues, and captivity, along with the wicked, but also that they would suffer particular afflictions from the wicked, in order to receive in the life to come in return for all these evils those rewards which the wicked know not of. Next comes:

[12:11-13] And when he was near to enter into Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, I know that you are a beautiful woman and that when the Egyptians shall see you they will say that she is his wife. And they will kill me and keep you. Say, therefore, I pray, that you are my sister, that I may be well used for you, and so forth up to the point where it says,

[12:17-19a] But the Lord scourged Pharaoh and his house with most grievous stripes for Sarai, Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram and said to him, /175/ What is this that you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? For what cause did you say, she was your sister, that I might take her to my wife? Abram did *not lie* because *he said that his wife was his sister. For she was this too, being near in blood,*[232] *just as Lot with the same relationship was called his brother, although he was his brother's son. And so he kept silent about her being his wife, and did not deny that she was* his sister*, committing his wife's chastity to the care of God, and as a man guarding against the treachery of men, since, if he did not guard against danger as far as possible, he would have been testing God rather than putting his hope in* him*. … At length it turned out in accordance with* Abram's *trust in God. For Pharaoh, the king*

231 Cf. Josh. 1:1-3; 3:15-17. Bede's use of the Greek form, 'Jesus', of the name Joshua underscores the allegorical significance of the event.

232 Bede's comment on Gen. 11:29 (*In Gen.* 3.869-79 [above, p. 243]) suggests that he may have been sceptical of Augustine's argument that Sarah was closely enough related to Abraham to be called his sister, even though he quotes it here.

of Egypt, who had taken her as his wife, was gravely afflicted, and returned her to her husband. In this case it would be wrong for us to believe that she had been defiled by intercourse with another, for it is much more credible that Pharaoh was not allowed to do so by reason of his great afflictions.[233] And it can also be said, according to the book of Esther, that when any one of the women had pleased the king, *for six months* she was *anointed with oil of myrrh, and for another six months* she *used certain perfumes and sweet spices*, and then at last she *went in to the king*.[234] Perhaps what happened, after Sarai had pleased the king, while her entrance to him was being prepared over the course of a year and Pharaoh had given many gifts to Abram, was that Pharaoh was then struck down by the Lord, while she still remained untouched by intercourse with him.

[13:1] And Abram went up out of Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him into the southern part. This does not mean into the southern part of Egypt, but into the southern part of the Promised Land. For he did not journey southwards from Egypt, because anyone who does that goes farther away from the Promised Land. But, leaving Egypt entirely, part of which he had gone into, he first entered the southern part of the Promised Land, which was nearest.

It should also be noted that on the literal level Abram is not only said above to have *gone down into Egypt*,[235] but now to have *gone up out of Egypt*, because the land of Egypt is reputed to lie not only below the land of Canaan, but also below all the other regions of the world, just as on the other hand the region of the Scythians is thought to rise higher than all other parts of the world. This can very easily be conjectured from the courses of the rivers flowing down from elsewhere **/176/** into the former and from the courses of the rivers flowing forth from the latter.[236] And it is appropriate to the allegorical senses that the land of Canaan is higher than Egypt, because of course the former signifies the promise of the heavenly fatherland and the latter the tribulations and toils of the present life. For the Lord both promised and gave the land of Canaan as an inheritance to the people of Israel; but in Egypt not only was Abraham put to the test, although he was very quickly safe-guarded by the Lord, but also his descendants were

233 Augustine, *DCD* 16.19 (CCSL 48, 522).

234 Esther 2:12-13.

235 Gen. 12:10.

236 If I have interpreted Bede's meaning correctly, he implies that in terms of average elevation Egypt is the lowest region of the world, and Scythia, the highest. Therefore, rivers flow down out of Scythia and down into Egypt.

oppressed by a very harsh and long-lasting servitude, although they too were miraculously redeemed at last, and led out from thence. Therefore the Promised Land is higher than the territory of Egypt, although it is situated nearby, because although the just and the unjust seem outwardly to lead their lives in common in this world, nevertheless the citizens of heaven excel all the lovers of this world by the great loftiness of their devoted understanding. Therefore the fact that Abram is said to have gone up out of Egypt and come with all his people to the southern part signifies allegorically that both he himself, as long as he was living in the flesh, and all the elect, clearly the sons of the same promise, bend down their thoughts to base things as occasion demands to give attention to the needs of the body, in order that, after having cared for the body, they may immediately summon again the whole effort of their minds to the contemplation of those things which are above, and seek to be restored by the *Sun of justice*[237] with the glowing heat of love and the light of heavenly grace. That is to say, going up from Egypt to come into the southern part, in a mystical sense means that, having taken care of the needs of the body, we pray with diligent effort for the benefit of divine light and love from the Lord. For there is no doubt that we make the journey to the heavenly fatherland by such prayer and purpose of the mind. Hence it is appropriately added:

[13:3a] And he returned by the way that he came from the south to Bethel. Certainly, for us to direct our course to Bethel by way of the south is to hasten by the light of heavenly knowledge and the inspiration of the most profound love with repeated steps of good works to the entrance of the house of God, which is what Bethel signifies.[238] It is his house, of course, which, as the Apostle says, is *not made with hands*, but *eternal in heaven*,[239] which the Prophet desired to see, when he said, *I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of your house, and the place of the tabernacle of your glory*.[240]

[13:3b-4] To the place where before he had pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai, in the place of the altar which he had made before, and he called upon the name of the Lord. It should be noted that **/177/** the blessed Abram, figuratively allegorizing by his journey the progress of the elect, is said to have returned to Bethel from or by way of the south.[241]

237 Malach. 4:2.

238 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 62).

239 2 Cor. 5:1.

240 Ps. 25:8 (26:8).

241 The Vulgate's phrase (Gen. 13:3) is 'from the south' [*a meridie*], which Bede immediately paraphrases as 'by way of the south' [*per meridiem*]. Here he insists on both phrases.

But the text adds that he did not enter the city, but that he reached a point between it and Ai, where he is said to have called upon the Lord. This place of prayer is reported above to have been located on a mountain,[242] because the elect, who are still held fast by the bonds of the flesh and located in the path of progress of the virtues, are certainly hard pressed to come to the house of the celestial habitation even with the whole effort of their minds, yet they exert themselves to hasten toward it with uninterrupted steps of good works. But they cannot yet either enter it or discern its citizens and its King in their beauty. But between receiving the faith, whereby they are consecrated to the Lord, and entering the kingdom, in which they long to see him, they climb the height of good work like the middling peak of an extraordinary mountain.

Now Ai or Aggai, as the old translators put the name of that city, means '*seeking*' or '*festival*'.[243] This name is certainly very well suited to that time, when each of the faithful is consecrated to the Lord by the sacraments of salvation. Concerning that time, the Apostle utters these words of advice, *And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption*.[244] For how great a 'festival' of the mind it is to be redeemed from the power of darkness, and to be made a seal of the true King by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit! That city of invincible faith can indeed rightly be called 'seeking', for by it not only did the elect learn to seek the Lord, from whom they wandered too far, but the Lord himself also made known that he had sought them as a good shepherd seeks his sheep, just as he himself says, *The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*.[245]

And the saints build an altar to the Lord on the aforesaid mountain of good conduct, an altar not other, certainly, than their own body and soul, through which they also call upon his name, knowing that without the help of his name they are able neither to set out on the path of justice, nor to complete the course of good intentions. I have taken considerable pains to explain these things about the altar of Abram in order that no one should think that the blessed Moses wished to describe so skilfully with reiterated narrative the location of Abram's tent and altar or **/178/** oratory out of fondness for a simple record of the facts rather than for the sake of spiritual

242 Cf. Gen. 12:8.
243 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 61).
244 Eph. 4:30.
245 Luke 19:10.

understanding.[246] In this context it should be noted that Abram is described both as having built the altar and as having called upon the Lord, not in Egypt and likewise not in Chaldea or in Haran, but only in the land of Canaan, which he received in promise, because of course we are able to make perfect works and to offer prayers worthy of God only in the unity of the Catholic faith, and only in the hope of the divine promise. Moreover, Bethel is the city that was formerly called Luz, and it received the name Bethel from Jacob, after he saw the heavenly miracles and hosts as he was sleeping there,[247] and furthermore the city Ai was located *at about the twelfth milestone* from Jerusalem as you go toward Neapolis.[248]

[13:5-7a] But Lot also, who was with Abram, had flocks of sheep and herds of beasts and tents. Neither was the land able to bear them that they might dwell together, for their substance was great, and they could not dwell together. Whereupon also there arose a strife between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot, and so forth. In these verses it is explained in turn how Lot *departed* from Abram *with their love intact*,[249] since the latter preferred that his deeply beloved and virtuous brother[250] be bodily separated from him rather than that they stay together with the discord and quarrels of the weak-minded men of their households.[251] But Abram never separated Lot from the profound love of his heart after he was separated from him in body, as the sequel of the sacred narrative clearly proves, in which with his entire force he promptly saved Lot, who had been captured by his enemies.[252] And this was merited, because even though he lived apart Lot himself in no way altered the work of virtue and faith, which he had been accustomed to practise with his elder brother.

[13:10-11a] And Lot, lifting up his eyes, saw all the country about the Jordan, which was watered throughout before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, as the paradise of the Lord and like Egypt as one comes to Zoar. And Lot chose to himself the country about the

246 This is an important clue to Bede's interpretative assumptions and therefore to his methods. Facts (*historia*) are important, but a dense cluster of details or repeated insistence upon certain facts can only be justified on the assumption that they point to a spiritual level of interpretation. See Kendall, 'The Responsibility of *Auctoritas*', p. 111.

247 Cf. Gen. 28:11-19.

248 Jerome, *De situ* (PL 23, 861).

249 Augustine, *DCD* 16.20 (CCSL 48, 523).

250 Lot, of course, was the son of his brother. The usage is found in the Vulgate, e.g., Gen. 13:8; 14:14; etc.

251 Cf. Gen. 13:8-9.

252 Cf. Gen. 14:14-16.

Jordan, and he departed from the east, and so forth up to the point where it says,

[13:13] And the men of Sodom were very wicked and sinners before the face of the Lord beyond measure. Holy Scripture praises the fertility of the land, and at the same time calls attention to the impiety of the inhabitants, in order that they may be understood to be deserving of greater condemnation, because **/179/** they turned the greatest gifts of God not to the fruit of piety but to the increase of licentiousness. It is thereby tacitly added to the merits of the blessed Lot that, living in that land among those native peoples, he could not be corrupted in any respect either by the fruitfulness of the rich soil, or by the example of his fellow inhabitants, from the integrity of his purity. And by what sins the men of Sodom were subjugated, aside from the one unspeakable sin which Scripture mentions in the sequel,[253] the prophet Ezekiel sufficiently explains, speaking to Jerusalem: *Behold this was the iniquity of Sodom your sister, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance, and the idleness of her and of her daughters; and they did not put forth their hand to the needy and to the poor. And they were lifted up and committed abominations before me*.[254] That the blessed Lot was free from all these sins is proved not only by the text of the sacred narrative, which reveals that he greeted the angels with a hospitable reception and was rescued by them from the wicked men who were going to be destroyed,[255] but also by the declaration of the blessed Peter the Apostle, according to which, *And* [God] *delivered the just man Lot, oppressed by the injustice and way of life of the wicked*.[256] For he was just in sight and hearing, dwelling among those who from day to day tormented his just spirit with their wicked deeds. What good merit could he lack – he who is shown to be just by the Apostle's words, he about whom his contemporaries were able to hear only the fame of his justice, he to whose pure eyes and ears the crimes of his neighbours that he heard and saw were nothing but torment and affliction? The fact that it says of him that *he departed from the east* signifies that he went toward Haran and Mesopotamia, from whence he had departed bodily long ago under the leadership of Abram. But since with respect to his state of mind the reader might be in doubt as to whether he was still held by love of family and country, or whether, like Abram, he had already departed entirely from

253 The 'unspeakable' sin is the threat of male rape, which the men of Sodom made against the two angels disguised as men who came to Lot. Cf. Gen. 19:5.

254 Ezek. 16:49-50.

255 Cf. Gen. 19:1-17.

256 2 Peter 2:7.

his country and family and the house of his father,[257] Scripture has taken particular care to make clear that he went out from that region and its inhabitants not only in body but also in spirit, and that for the sake of his faith and hope of divine blessing he consented to remain a permanent stranger and wanderer wherever Abram wanted. For Scripture reveals that the city of Haran was located in a region to the east of the Promised Land, when **/180/** it states in the sequel, *Then Jacob went on in his journey and came into the east country*,[258] when he certainly journeyed from Bethel to Haran.[259]

[13:14-15] And the Lord said to Abram after Lot was separated from him, Lift up your eyes and look from the place wherein you now are to the north and south and to the east and to the west. All the land which you see I will give to you and to your seed forever [*in sempiternum*]. Some texts[260] have *usque in seculum*, because either phrase is a translation of the single Greek word, *aion*. If therefore this is read as meaning 'for eternity', one is properly puzzled how the seed of Abram could possess all that land 'forever', since human existence in this life cannot be 'eternal'. But if it is read as meaning 'for the age' [*in seculum*], and *if* it is *accepted, as we firmly believe, that the beginning of the future age starts with the end of the present one, no problem will arise. For even though the Israelites have been driven out of Jerusalem, yet they still remain in other cities of the land of Canaan, and they will remain until the end. And since that whole land is inhabited by Christians, it too is the seed of Abraham*.[261]

It can also be understood mystically that the blessed Abraham was told, *All the land which you see, I will give to you and to your seed forever*, because the country of the heavenly fatherland, which the Promised Land prefigured, is taken possession of by all the elect, namely, the seed of Abraham, so that they remain in it forever, in accordance with what is said of the fire of the burnt offering in Exodus,[262] *This is the perpetual fire which will never go out from the altar*.[263] For that material fire by which the sacrificial animals were burned in the tabernacle could not be perpetual, since not only the tabernacle itself but also the altar and the priesthood have long since been destroyed. But the fire of love by which the elect are kindled to offer God

257 Cf. Gen. 12:1.
258 Gen. 29:1.
259 Cf. Gen. 28:10–29:4.
260 I.e., the Old-Latin text; cf. Augustine, *Quaestiones* 1.28; 1.31 (CCSL 33, 11–12; 13).
261 Augustine, *DCD* 16.21 (CCSL 48, 524); cf. *DCD* 16.26 (CCSL 48, 531).
262 Bede's slip for 'Leviticus'.
263 Lev. 6:13.

sacrifices of prayers and good deeds will never go out from the altar, that is, from their souls, which are signified by that altar of Moses, because in this life they glow with divine love, and in the future life, seeing God more perfectly, they love with their whole heart, their whole soul, and their whole strength. And you will find many things **/181/** of this kind in the sacred rites of the Law, which, although they were ordained to be done or to continue by perpetual decree, are nevertheless demonstrably not perpetual unless they are understood spiritually.

[13:18a/b] So Abram, removing his tent, came and dwelt by the vale of Mambre, which is in Hebron. The city of Hebron is *about twenty-two miles south of* Jerusalem. In the time of Moses it was called *Arbe* or Cariatharbe, *that is*, the city of *Four*, *because the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were buried there, as well as Adam*, the first created man, *as is written in the book of Joshua*.[264] But *in later times, having been obtained by Hebron one of the sons of Caleb, it takes the name Hebron,* as *the Chronicles* relate.[265] Anyone who wonders how it is possible that it is called by this name both now and before the time of the sons should understand that the word 'Hebron' could have been added by the priest Ezra when he restored the Holy Scripture, which had been burned by the Chaldeans. Scholars of the sacred texts find that he added many such things in the Scriptures.

[13:18c] And he built there an altar to the Lord. This is the third altar that Abram builds, for he had built the first by the place of Shechem, and the second between Bethel and Ai. In all of these it should be noted that Scripture nowhere records that he offered a sacrifice, but only that he invoked the name of the Lord. But even in subsequent passages of the Scriptures we do not find that he offered any victim or sacrifice to God, with the exception of one ram, which he offered as a burnt offering to the Lord in place of

264 According to the Vulgate, *nomen Hebron antea uocabatur Cariatharbe / Adam maximus ibi inter Enacim situs est* (Josh. 14:15), which Douay-Rheims translates as, 'The name of Hebron before was called Cariath-Arbe. Adam the greatest among the Enacims was laid there'. KJV has 'And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims'.

265 Jerome, *De situ*, s.v. '*Arboc*' (PL 23, 862); cf. Jerome, *De situ*, s.v. 'Cariatharbee' (PL 23, 885); Bede, *Expositio Actuum* 7.16 (CCSL 121, 35). According to Josh. 14:13-14, Joshua gave Hebron to Caleb and his descendants (cf. Num. 14:24). It is not made clear when the name-change from Cariath-Arbe to Hebron occurred. I do not find in Chronicles (*Verba Dierum*) or elsewhere a specific statement that Hebron acquired its new name *after* it came into the hands of one of the sons of Caleb. None of the sons of Caleb was named Hebron. However, Hebron the son of Mareshah is named in the same verse with the sons of Caleb in 1 Chron./1 Para. 2:42, which may have given rise to Jerome's statement.

his son, in which the passion of *the mediator of God and men*[266] was very clearly prefigured. Nor do we read that his son Isaac offered any sacrificial victim to God, but only that he built an altar to the Lord.[267] And similarly, when Jacob made an altar at God's command, we nevertheless do not find that he slaughtered any sacrificial animals,[268] except when he was about to enter Egypt on account of Joseph, after he had left the Promised Land; for at that time on reaching Beersheba[269] he is reported to have received a vision of God, after having slaughtered victims there.[270] But even there the kind of the victims is left unexpressed, as well as the number. Nor do we find any from then until the time of Passover, which was celebrated in Egypt in **/182/** the blood of the lamb, although the patriarchs had offered a sacrificial animal to God for so many courses of years. Why is it, therefore, that from the time of the promise made to Abram to the time of the delivery of the Law no victims were offered, with the exception of one victim, which a father sacrificed in place of his son in a prefiguration of God the Father, who did not spare his own Son, but handed him over for us all? And why is it that so great an abundance of victims did not subsequently cease to be offered daily under the Law, unless because it was being clearly foreshadowed that the grace and the truth which had been promised to Abraham and to his seed were to be restored to the world, not in the offerings of victims, but in the passion of Christ? Not only we ourselves but also those just persons who came before the time of his passion are saved by faith in him and the sacraments of his passion.[271] In agreement with this allegorical figure is the fact that Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, who lived in the time of the patriarchs, is said to have offered the Lord, not the blood of victims, but both bread and wine,[272] and to have exhibited the appearance of a priest of

266 1 Tim. 2:5.

267 Cf. Gen. 26:25.

268 Jacob built altars at Salem (Gen. 33:20) and Bethel (Gen. 35:1-7), but only the latter was at God's command (Gen. 35:1).

269 In the Vulgate text of Gen. 46:1, Jacob is said to have come *ad puteum Iuramenti*, 'to the well of the Oath'. This is a translation of the proper name Bersabee/Beersheba. The KJV has: 'and came to Beer-sheba'. Although Bede would probably know the connection between 'the well of the Oath' and 'Bersabee' from his sources (e.g., Jerome, *De situ* [PL 23, 881]), the fact that he doesn't explain the reference suggests that he has in mind an Old-Latin text reading 'Bersabee'.

270 Cf. Gen. 46:1-2.

271 With respect to this passage, Jones ('Bede's Commentary on Genesis', p. 130) observes that Bede's 'detailed insistence that Christian tradition never included animal sacrifices suggests a contemporary local problem'.

272 Cf. Gen. 14:18.

the Gospel rather than the Law.[273] Indeed, he blessed Abraham himself,[274] to whom the blessing and in whom the blessing of all nations had been promised, so that it was revealed by all these things that the promise given to the patriarchs was to be fulfilled not by the rites of the Mosaic Law, but by the grace of the Lord's passion.

[14:1-2b] And it came to pass at that time that Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Pontus and Chedorlaomer king of the Elamites and Tidal king of nations made war against Bera king of Sodom and against Birsha king of Gomorrah, and so forth. In these verses it is reported how Chedorlaomer king of the Elamites, that is, of Persia, with the kings who were allied with him, waged war against Pentapolis[275] and conquered it, and which nations, when they hastened to this struggle, they destroyed as they met them on the way. It must not be thought that the author of Holy Scripture recorded these things for the sake of the study of history alone. Rather, it was done for the sake of the divine blessing that was to be entrusted to us, for in the victory of Abram, whereby he conquered so many kings with so few men,[276] it teaches us what the power of faith is, with which he was fortified, and how great the grace of the divine blessing is, with which he was provided, and that only by the same faith would the saints who were to be born thereafter conquer kingdoms, **/183/** work justice, and obtain these promises.

But it should not be overlooked that there is another very important reason why the battle of these kings was written down, as well as first the flight and afterwards the rescue of the Sodomites,[277] who we know were completely destroyed by divine wrath in the days to come. Indeed, seeing their crimes, God first attacked them with slaughter and captivity by their enemies; but soon by means of his faithful servant[278] he rescued them from that same captivity with everything that had been taken. This was done for the sake of the blessed Lot, who among them served God faithfully, so that, aided by such a special gift of divine protection and delivered from evil, they might abandon their errors and learn to serve God and follow the precedent for good works that he set, by whom and through whom they had been saved

273 This latter clause does not have any biblical warrant.

274 Cf. Gen. 14:19.

275 That is, the five cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboyim, and Zoar (Gen. 14:2). See above, p. 108, n. 190.

276 Cf. Gen. 14:14-15.

277 Cf. Gen. 14:10; 14:17.

278 That is, Abram; cf. Gen. 14:13-16.

by the grace of God. But since they were unwilling to be reformed from their wickedness either by him, or by divine censures, or by gifts, but instead heaped up daily the crimes of their former depravity with new outrages, it remained for them to be damned forever by heavenly wrath. This sequence of censure and punishment with respect to infidels and sinners does not fail to be carried out in the same way up to today, indeed up to the end of the world, since those who take no care to be corrected either by blessings or scourgings from heaven are damned afterwards by divine vengeance. And in such sort the universe itself will annihilate its physical state forever, while those people throughout the world who persist in being both ungrateful for heavenly gifts and insensible to heavenly scourgings will be suddenly snatched by the whirlwind of Last Judgement to eternal destruction.

[14:3] All these came together in the woodland vale, which is now the Salt Sea. What is said here, when the battle is finished, touches lightly on the subject by anticipation.[279] For the cause of the war, and by what route the hostile army approached him after effecting so great a slaughter, is explained subsequently, so that the greater the strength of his adversaries is shown to be, the stronger the faith of Abram may appear, by which their whole power was so easily broken. And the woodland vale itself is the region where at that time Pentapolis was located, that is, the province of Sodom and the neighbouring cities. But, after those cities were flooded from the Jordan after the fire, in Holy Scripture the woodland vale is now called the Salt Sea, or the Dead Sea, and by historians of the Greeks *the Lake of Asphalt, that is, of pitch.*[280] *And it is between Jericho and Zoar*.[281] **/184/**

[14:5b/d] And they smote the Rephaim in Ashteroth-Karnaim and the Zuzim with them and the Emim in Shaveh-Kiriathaim. The Rephaim, so-called in Hebrew, are called 'giants' in Greek;[282] and in the singular a giant is called a 'Rapha'. And their *land*, which was called *Ashteroth-Karnaim*, was *on a ridge overlooking Sodom*.[283] Moreover up to the present day *a village* called '*Carnea*' is pointed out *across the river Jordan*.[284] And Ashteroth-Karnaim means 'sheep-folds of horns',[285] since they were certainly the dwelling-places of strong men. *Shaveh* is *a city of the Emim*

279 For *praeoccupando* used as a technical term, see Augustine, *DCD* 20.16.
280 *In Gen.* 3.393-98 (see above, p. 228).
281 Isidore, *Etym.* 13.19.4.
282 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 70).
283 Jerome, *De situ* (PL 23, 861).
284 Jerome, *De situ* (PL 23, 885).
285 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 61 ['*Astaroth*']; 63 ['*Carnaim*']).

located *above the district of Sodom*, *which is so-called up to the present day*.[286] *Kiriathaim*, which is added to it, means '*their city*',[287] and the sense is, they also smote the Emim in their city 'Save', as the Seventy Translators have it. Even the name shows that the Emim were a very powerful people, as well as the Zuzim. For *Zuzim* means '*the terrible ones*', and *Emim*, '*the horrible ones*'.[288]

[14:6a] And the Horites in the mountains of Seir. In the period after these events, when the Horites had been driven out, these mountains with the bordering regions were indeed possessed by the sons of Esau, who was also called Seir, *because he was hairy*.[289] However, it seems probable that it was not he but another Seir from whom the mountains of Seir took their name – namely the patriarch of the Horites from whose line Esau took a wife, as Scripture declares in the sequel, *Esau took wives of the daughters of Canaan, Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the son of Zibeon the Hivite*.[290] What this lineage was and whence it came is revealed shortly afterwards when, after listing the line of Esau, it concludes: *These are the chieftains of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, the wife of Esau. These are the sons of Esau, and these their chieftains. The same is Edom*.[291] And immediately a new genealogical list is added, whereby it is stated, *These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan and Shobal and Zibeon*,[292] and a little later, *And these are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. This is the Anah* **/185/** *who found the hot waters in the wilderness when he fed the asses of Zibeon his father. And he had a son Dishon and a daughter Oholibamah*.[293] Therefore since Esau had a wife from the tribe of the Horites, Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the son of Zibeon the son of Seir, it is definitely established that the mountains of Seir, in which the Horites were smitten, take their name, not from Esau, who, having been born long afterwards, acquired this region, but from Seir the patriarch of these same Horites.

[14:7a] They returned and came to the fountain of Mishpat. The same

286 Jerome, *De situ*, s.v. '*Saue*' (PL 23, 919); Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 14.5 (CCSL 72, 18).

287 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Joshua (CCSL 72, 91 ['*Cariatham*']).

288 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 14.5 (CCSL 72, 18).

289 Jerome, *De situ* (PL 23, 919); cf. Gen. 36:8-9; Deut. 2:1-5; 2:12. In *De situ*, Jerome says that the mountain Seir was so-called because Esau was shaggy.

290 Gen. 36:2.

291 Gen. 36:18-19.

292 Gen. 36:20.

293 Gen. 36:24-25.

is Kadesh. Mishpat means 'judgement';[294] hence the old translation says more plainly at this point, '*They came to the fountain of judgement*'. And moreover this *is said by anticipation*, since the place received that name long afterwards, because the Lord *judged the people there* after they went out from Egypt.[295]

[14:7b] And they smote all the country of the Amalekites. In connection with the above verse it must be understood that the Amalekites were *cut down* near Kadesh-Barnea, *where Miriam* [*Maria*] *lay down, and where Moses struck the cliff* and brought forth *water for the thirsting people* from the rock.[296] And this follows,

[14:7c] And the Amorite that dwelt in Hazazon-Tamar. This pertains to another place, *that is, the town which is now called En-Gedi,*[297] *fertile with balsam and palms*. Hence *Hazazon-Tamar* means '*city of palms', and Tamar means 'palm'*.[298]

[14:8d] And they set themselves against them in battle array in the woodland vale. In place of 'woodland vale', *the Hebrew text has 'in the vale of Siddim',* which *means* a *pleasant* and *woody* place.[299] For such was Pentapolis, which on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants deserved not only to be consumed by fires,[300] but also to be hidden forever from the gaze of all living creatures by an abyss of waters.

[14:13a] And behold one that had escaped told Abram the Hebrew. It is clear from this passage that those who think the Hebrew people were named, as it were, **/186/** 'Ebrea' after Abraham are seriously mistaken, since he himself is called 'Abram the Hebrew'. The name certainly derives from Eber the father[301] of Joktan, in whose time the division of languages occurred.[302] Moreover Hebreus means '*a passer over*', which is clearly suited to the faith

294 Cf. Jerome, *In Isaiam* 2.5.7 (PL 24, 79).

295 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 14.7 (CCSL 72, 18). The place where the Lord delivered his judgement on the people (Num. 14:27-35) was in 'the desert of Paran, which is in Kadesh' (Num. 13:27 [13:26]). Here we have another reference to the technical concept of 'anticipation' (borrowed from Jerome).

296 Jerome, *De situ*, s.v. '*Cades*' (PL 23, 885); cf. Num. 20:1-11.

297 Cf. 2 Chron./2 Para. 20:2.

298 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 14.7 (CCSL 72, 18).

299 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 14.7 (CCSL 72, 18).

300 Cf. Wisdom 10:6.

301 Reading *patre* for *filio*. The manuscript form *filio* must be Bede's slip or a copyist's error in the archetype, since Eber was the father of Joktan (cf. Gen. 10:25), as Bede well knew (*In Gen.* 3.252-54 [above, p. 224]). Eber was the son of Shelah (Gen. 10:24; 11:14).

302 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 10.24 (CCSL 72, 14); Augustine, *DCD* 16.3 (CCSL 48, 503).

and merits of Abram.[303] For he passed over temporal desires, and hastened to pass over from the present life to the joys of the world to come. For the saint was not an inhabitant of earth, but a wayfarer and a stranger, saying to his Creator, *for I am a sojourner with you and a stranger as all my fathers were*.[304] Nor is it an accident that, although both brothers, that is, Abram and Lot, descended from the line of Eber, nevertheless both are not called Hebrews, but only Abram. And he also left this name to the people of God who descended from him. But since he himself had passed over the world more perfectly, and transmitted as it were a hereditary right to the same passage to his heirs, his epithet signifies what he had received as a gift more than his brother. And it is fitting that Abram is called the Hebrew, that is, 'the Passer Over', for the first time in this passage, when he was about to rescue his brother who was in danger from his enemies, in order that Scripture might make known by implication that it is the special duty of those who themselves are able not to succumb weakly to the temptations of vices but can pass over them with alacrity of spirit to save others from the dangers of temptations both by their teaching and by their intervention.

Furthermore, Abram freed his brother Lot, a man devoted to God, from his enemies, and he freed the Sodomites, men very hateful to God, in order that it might be mystically prefigured that by his merits and interventions both the elect and the wicked among the people of Israel were frequently to be instructed concerning the evils of this world, although only the elect could be saved from eternal destruction. And it should be observed that, as long as the territory of Sodom remained still unpunished, the just man Lot was afflicted by temporal injuries because of the wicked, and the wicked on whom God took pity were relieved from temporal hardships because of the just man Lot. But when the judgement of the final punishment fell upon the wicked citizens, then the just man could not be affected in any way by the punishments of the wicked, nor could any of the wicked **/187/** share in his marvellous salvation. On the contrary, only the good were saved, and only the wicked were lost. In this both the state and the end of the whole world are clearly expressed, since it is certainly the case that sometimes in this life the good are afflicted for a time on account of the proximity of the wicked, and the wicked are saved from adversities for a time on account of the proximity of the good. But at the moment of Last Judgement only the wicked will be eternally lost, and only the just will be delivered forever.

303 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 14.13 (CCSL 72, 18).

304 Ps. 38:13 (39:12); Ps. 118:19 (119:19); cf. Gen. 23:4.

[14:14a/b] Which when Abram had heard, to wit, that his brother Lot was taken, he numbered of the servants born in his house, three hundred and eighteen ready for action, and so forth. It is indeed a very great miracle of divine power that Abram made so great a slaughter of his enemies with so small a force. But the number of soldiers with which he conquered contains a deeper sacrament of the faith, by means of which we must win our spiritual fight. The number three hundred and eighteen undoubtedly signifies the sign of the most victorious cross and the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ, by whom this sign was consecrated as a bulwark of our salvation, since the Greeks represent three hundred by the letter tau, which is appropriate for an allegorical figure of the cross. For if it had acquired the upstroke in the centre, it would then clearly have been seen to express, not a figure of the cross, but the sign of the cross itself.[305] And ten and eight are represented among the Greeks by I and H, which are the first letters in the word Jesus.[306] So when the number three hundred and eighteen is represented in Greek, there is so little difference that it can be read as 'the cross of Jesus'. Therefore it is appropriate that Abram conquered his enemies with three hundred and eighteen companions and delivered his brother, so that he might mystically prefigure the one to be born from his seed who recalled the world from death by the passion of the cross, and so that he himself might stand out, exalted by the name of the Saviour, that is, Jesus, and worthy of being cherished by all the world; but also so that he might prefigure that all those who were fit for eternal life would pursue it only by means of this venerable sign and in his awe-inspiring name.

[14:14c-15] And he pursued them to Dan. And dividing his companions, he rushed upon them in the night and defeated them and pursued /188/ them as far as Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. The whole course of sacred Scripture is full of mystical figures, and not only in words and deeds, but also in those places and times in which it is enacted, in accordance with the statement of the Apostle that *all these things happened to them in figure, and they are written for our sake*.[307] Dan means '*judgement*',

305 *In Gen.* 2.861-70 (above, p. 166).

306 I (iota) and H (eta), the tenth and eighth letters of the Greek alphabet respectively, were very frequently used in Medieval Latin in the abbreviation (*nomen sacrum*) for Jesus (*Iesus*), ~~IHC~~ or ~~IHS~~.

307 1 Cor. 10:11. Bede, like most of his predecessors, often quotes this passage according to the Old-Latin text (*propter nos* instead of the Vulgate *ad correptionem nostram*). For other examples of Bede's thinking on this topic, cf. *Retractatio* 10.5-6 (CCSL 121, 139–40); *De templo* 1 (CCSL 119A, 148); *In Sam.* Prol. (CCSL 119, 9–10); *De tabernaculo* 1, 5-9 (CCSL 119A, 5); *Epistola ad Accam* (PL 94, 697–98).

Hobah, '*verdict*', and Damascus, 'cup *of blood*'.[308] Therefore, pursuing his enemies, Abram came upon them in Dan and defeated them at night when they were unguarded and careless. They were boasting that they had raged as far as that place and rejoicing, as it were, in the plunder they had taken, because all sinners, priding themselves both on their wealth in this life and on their oppression of the innocent, are given full scope to boast of their deeds up to the decisive moment of the divine Judgement. But when with thoughtless blindness, placed as it were in the middle of the night, they are uttering the words 'peace' and 'security', at that moment sudden destruction will come upon them. Hence it is justly said that they were defeated and pursued as far as Hobah, that is, 'verdict', which must be understood as none other than the verdict of sudden and eternal destruction. Hobah is said to be *on the left hand of Damascus*. Damascus, as I have said, means 'cup of blood'; the word rightly signifies the pleasure of vices. For what is the pleasure of sin except a cup of blood, whenever anyone is eager to accomplish without hesitation those things which pertain to flesh and blood? And Hobah where Abram defeated his adversaries is *on the left hand of Damascus*, because the damnation which is going to punish the wicked will thrust them into eternal punishment with the devil and his angels, which is usually signified by the left side.

Moreover, *Damascus* is *a noble city of Phoenicia*,[309] and once the capital of all Syria.[310] *Dan*, also *a town of Phoenicia*, was *the boundary of the province of Judea to the north*,[311] *where today there is Paneas, which was once called Caesarea Philippi. And hence is derived the name 'Jordan', which flows from the Lebanon*.[312] *Dan is in fact one of* its *sources*, **/189/** and *the other is called Jor, which means 'stream'. When the two sources which are not far from one another come together into one stream, it is from there on called the Jordan*.[313]

[14:18-20] But Melchizedek the king of Salem, bringing forth bread and wine, for he was the priest of the most high God, blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram by the most high God, who created heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, by whose protection the enemies

308 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 64).
309 Jerome, *De situ* (PL 23, 890).
310 Cf. Isidore, *Etym*. 9.2.3.
311 Jerome, *De situ* (PL 23, 890).
312 Jerome, *In Ezech.* 8.27.19 (CCSL 75, 374).
313 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 14.14 (CCSL 72, 19).

are in your hands. And he gave him the tithes of all.[314] First of all, in this passage it should be noted that the patriarchs had already demonstrated what the Apostles declare. *And if one member*, Paul says, *suffer any thing, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it*.[315] Indeed, while Lot was suffering misfortune, Abram suffered with it; while they were rejoicing over their rescue and his victory, Melchizedek rejoiced with them, and he pours a heavenly blessing on the conqueror who had put himself in danger for the sake of his brother's hardships. Not only does he extol the man as the victor, but also with fitting praise the Lord as the giver of victory, in accordance with Christ's words in the Gospel, *Let them see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven*.[316]

Next, it should be observed that Abram is blessed after the battle and victory, and this by a king and priest of the most high God. Since all of us also belong to the promise of the heavenly fatherland, we await after labours of good works the blessing of the eternal kingdom, which was prepared for us from the beginning of the world[317] by the king and great priest, namely *the mediator of God and men, Jesus Christ*.[318] Concerning his kingdom which he holds coequally and coeternally with his Father, the Psalmist says, *The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool*, and so forth.[319] Concerning his priesthood in which he offered himself as a sacrificial victim to his Father for us, the Psalmist went on to add in the same Psalm, *The Lord has sworn and he will not repent, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*.[320]

It behooves my humble self to speak about and discuss very briefly here the meaning of this verse and the priesthood and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is prefigured in Melchizedek, for the good reason that the Apostle devoted **/190/** the best part of his Epistle to the Hebrews to discussing and explicating these matters in the most sublime way.[321] Merely following in his footsteps, I have just borrowed a few things to insert here from the many which he set forth. Accordingly, Melchizedek signifies the Lord Saviour, *who first indeed*, as the Apostle says, *by interpretation is king*

314 For discussion of Bede's exegetical commentary on Melchizedek, see Jones, 'Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 177–83.

315 1 Cor. 12:26.

316 Matt. 5:16.

317 Cf. Matt. 25:34.

318 1 Tim. 2:5.

319 Ps. 109:1 (110:1).

320 Ps. 109:4 (110:4).

321 Cf. Augustine, *DCD* 16.22 (CCSL 48, 524–25).

of justice, and then king of Salem, that is, king of peace.[322] With these words the blessed Apostle demonstrates how Melchizedek should be understood as an allegorical figure in such a way that he also teaches us very clearly to seek out in the literal text of the Old Testament the hidden meanings not only of things but also of names. Therefore just as Melchizedek figuratively signifies by his name and by his person the king of justice, Christ, so he also figuratively signifies the Church of the saints by the name of his city, that is to say, the city of the great King, of which it is written, *And his place is* in Salem, that is, *in peace*.[323] This Salem, moreover, is what was later called Jerusalem by King David. It became the capital of the whole province of Judea, because he purchased the place for the temple there, and he had bequeathed the costs of the building to his son Solomon.[324] It is evident to all readers that all these things and innumerable others which we read were done or said with respect to the same city pertain to the Church. Melchizedek even foretold the holy communion of the New Covenant by the unique nature of his sacrifice, of which he made Abram a participant at the same time as he blessed him. Our Lord himself not only first offered it in the sacrament of his body and blood, but he also left it to the Church to be offered always for the remission of sins. By the participation of the individual in the communion, Melchizedek taught that all the children of promise were to be blessed, so much so that no one can be a sharer in eternal life without participation in it. For, *Except you eat*, it says, *the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life*.[325] Therefore in signification of the great sacrament Melchizedek the priest blessed Abram, bringing forth to him part of the sacrifice which he had offered to the Lord in bread and wine, unquestionably revealing allegorically that not only we who come after the Lord's passion in the flesh, but also Abram himself who had received the promises and all his chosen seed were to be given eternal blessing through the offering of the Lord's passion. And indeed the same Abram had heard from the Lord, *And I will bless you* **/191/** *and magnify your name, and you shall be blessed*.[326] And he had heard, *And in you shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed*.[327] But before any son could

322 Hebr. 7:2.
323 Ps. 75:3 (76:2).
324 Cf. 1 Chron./1 Para. 21:21-25; 22:14-16; etc.
325 John 6:54-55.
326 Gen. 12:2.
327 Gen. 12:3.

be born to him who would be a coheir of the same blessing, and before he could offer any sacrificial victim to God to give thanks for the blessing granted him, he met Melchizedek the king of Salem, bringing forth the bread and wine which he had offered to God, and Melchizedek blessed him in order that he might clearly understand that he with all his seed was going to receive the blessing promised to him by the King of justice and the Begetter of supreme peace through the mystical sacrifice of bread and wine. Therefore let Jews not boast against Christians about the Levitical priesthood, since they offer victims of flesh, and we offer bread and wine to the Lord. For our sacrifice excels both in time and dignity: in time, that is to say, because Melchizedek offered this sacrifice before Abram or the chief priests who came from him through the line of Levi offered that one; and in dignity, because the Father said of this one, but not of that, *You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*.[328] Only an impious fool is going to deny that this was accomplished by this very act and is now manifest throughout the world. Therefore it is agreed that Melchizedek was a greater priest than the patriarch Abram. *For without any contradiction*, as the Apostle says, *that which is less is blessed by the better*.[329] The offering of Melchizedek was greater than the sacrificial victims that we read in the sequel were offered by Abram,[330] because the former was going to be offered by Christ the Lord, the latter by Aaron; the former by the priests of the New Covenant, the latter by the priests of the Old. Hence it is appropriately added, *And he gave him the tithes of all*. The Apostle understood and explained this very profoundly. Abram gave him the tithes not only on behalf of himself, but also on behalf of all those who were going to be born from him, among whom were those very priests who were going to receive tithes from the people.[331] *In Abraham*, he says, *even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes; for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him*.[332] Therefore, just as the Levitical tribe excelled, that is, the priestly caste from whom he received tithes, so also Melchizedek excelled those very priests and Levites when he received tithes from them in father Abram, for they

328 Ps. 109:4 (110:4).

329 Hebr. 7:7.

330 Cf. Gen. 15:10.

331 'Furthermore, although [Bede] knew that the financial dues owed to bishops could become an object of avarice, his discussion of the priesthood of Abraham when he wrote on Genesis suggests that he accepted them in principle. He simply believed that they had to be worked for'. Mayr-Harting, 'Bede, Rule of St Benedict, and Social Class', p. 14 (*BHW*, p. 420).

332 Hebr. 7:9-10.

were still in his loins. In this passage Abraham with his priesthood certainly signifies the people of Israel, and in turn **/192/** with his priesthood which he left to the heirs of the New Covenant Melchizedek signifies in particular *the mediator of God and men.*[333] And Abram is blessed and given a tithe by Melchizedek, since they themselves, who stood out pre-eminently in the Law and in the Levitical priesthood, were only blessed by Jesus Christ the Lord, and since they ascribed only to him all of the virtues which they were capable of possessing and acknowledged that these were owing to his grace, they were able to be saved. Hence too Peter, when the grace of the Gospel was already becoming clear, says to those zealous for the observance of the Law, as if to the priesthood which was promised for the future according to the order of Melchizedek, *Why do you tempt God to put a yoke of servitude upon the necks of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But by the grace of the Lord Jesus, we believe to be saved in like manner as they also*.[334] Therefore Abram gave the tithes of all to the priest Melchizedek from whom he had received the blessing, because there is no doubt that Melchizedek understood the allegory and symbol of a better priesthood than the one Abram represented – that is, that Abram displayed the allegorical figure of the priestly office of the Law and himself that of the episcopal office of the Gospel. For Abram was to beget from himself the temporal priesthood which would be preserved through the successions of bishops, but we find from our reading that Melchizedek occupied neither the beginning nor the end of the priesthood, that he had neither predecessor nor successor. Hence he offers a suitable symbol of the one to whom it was said, *You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*.[335] The few words I have spoken about Melchizedek seemed sufficient for my work. But any one who desires to know in full about him and about those sacraments which he prefigured should read carefully the entire Epistle to the Hebrews.

[14:21-23a] And the king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the persons and the rest take to yourself. And he answered him, I lift up my hand to the Lord God the most high, the possessor of heaven and earth, that from the woof thread to the lace of the boot I will not take of any things that are yours, and so forth. It should be carefully noted as an example to be followed of the moral life that Abram, who as a man truly taking pity on the needs of his neighbours had put himself in danger for the sake of

333 1 Tim. 2:5.
334 Acts 15:10-11.
335 Ps. 109:4 (110:4); Hebr. 5:6; 7:17.

rescuing Lot, as a man devoted to God had given tithes to the priest by whom he was blessed. As a despiser **/193/** of wealth, he refused to take any of the plunder which he had rescued, even when the king for whom he had conquered offered it. As a lover of justice, he did not neglect to distribute their shares to the soldiers who had fought with him.[336] Deservedly, so excellent a conscience is always exalted by new blessings of heavenly grace so that it can reach the more swiftly the citadel of the virtues. Hence it is proper that, when these things are done in this way, he is immediately made a sharer in the gift of heavenly wisdom and of the divine blessing. These are matters that I may better keep to be considered and thoroughly studied in the interpretation of the following book. **/194/**

336 One may perhaps see in this sentence Bede's adaptation of the values of the Germanic warrior code to the ethics of his Christian religion. As a chief, Abraham has the right to all of the wealth gained in battle (though he scorns to take it for himself), and he displays his generosity in freely rewarding his followers.

BOOK FOUR

[15:1] Now when these things were done, the word of the Lord came to Abram by a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram, I am your protector, and your reward exceeding great. The blessing that Abram had received from the priest Melchizedek is confirmed by the Lord himself. Whereas the priest had said, *And blessed be the most high God, by whose protection the enemies are in your hands*,[1] the Lord says, *I am your protector*. And whereas the priest had said, *Blessed be Abram by the most high God*, God himself says, *And your reward exceeding great*. He says 'reward', not only for the love which he had exhibited to his brother when he was placed in confinement, but also for all the love with which he had whole-heartedly served the Lord himself on whose account he had forsaken his country and his parents.

[15:2-3] And Abram said, Lord God, what will you give me? I shall go without children, and the son of the steward of my house is this Dammesek Eliezer. And Abram added, But to me you have not given seed, and lo my servant, born in my house, shall be my heir. He is not in a state of uncertainty as if doubtful of the promises of God, but is simply asking what reward he is going to receive from the Lord, since, not having a son in whom he might rejoice as his heir and sharer of the divine promise, he is going to have his servant as his heir instead. The servant was called by two names, that is, Dammesek Eliezer, by whom *they say that* the city of *Damascus was both founded and named*.[2] And favouring the wishes of the blessed Abram, the Lord also promised him the reward that he was seeking, when he immediately added:

[15:4b] He shall not be your heir, but he that shall come out of your bowels, him shall you have for your heir. It stands to reason that this was said of Isaac and his seed, concerning whom he afterwards heard, *For in Isaac shall your seed be called*.[3] For although they are the seed of Abraham,

1 Gen. 14:20.
2 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 15.2-3 (CCSL 72, 20).
3 Gen. 21:12; Rom. 9:7; Hebr. 11:18.

the sons of his concubines could not be sharers of his inheritance. And since only souls in heaven have to do with this inheritance beloved of God in which the divine protection and reward were going to be great, it is fittingly added: **/195/**

[15:5] And he brought him forth abroad and said to him, Look up to heaven and number the stars if you can. And he said to him, So shall your seed be. For the righteous and the elect are rightly compared to the stars, not only because like the stars they cannot be counted by men, but also because they are *exalted with heavenly bliss*,[4] because they climb over the lowest and basest desires of this life by means of their great loftiness of mind, and because, possessing the word of life, they shine among the wicked like the lights in the world. And of such in the end it may properly be said: *For star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead*.[5] But what he says, *So shall your seed be*, he says not only of those elect who were going to be born in the flesh from his stock, but also of us to whom the Apostle says, *And if you be Christ's, then are you the seed of Abraham*.[6] Hence, it is appropriate that when he was inside he first heard, *but he that shall come out of your bowels, him shall you have for your heir*,[7] obviously with respect to those who, coming from his seed, were still going to be coheirs of the promised blessing and inheritance. And afterwards, leading him outside to number the stars if he can, God commands him, saying, *So shall your seed be*, with respect to those, certainly, who were not to be begot from his bowels, but were to be gathered to his seed from the whole world, in accordance with what the Lord himself says in the Gospel with respect to the believing centurion who belonged not bodily but spiritually to the seed of Abraham, *And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*.[8] He led him outside so that he might learn that he would receive the seed of the blessing throughout the length and breadth of the whole world. He orders him to look up to heaven and number the stars so that he might learn that he was to be enriched by this inheritance in the heavenly fatherland.

[15:6] He believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. This statement *the Apostle quotes*[9] *in order to commend the grace of God*

4 Augustine, *DCD* 16.23 (CCSL 48, 525).
5 1 Cor. 15:41-42.
6 Gal. 3:29.
7 Gen. 15:4.
8 Matt. 8:11.
9 Gal. 3:6; Romans 4:3; also James 2:23.

… lest the circumcised boast and be unwilling to admit the uncircumcised peoples to faith in Christ. For at the time when it happened that Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness, he had not yet been circumcised.[10] Therefore the faith that is accounted to him for righteousness is not neutral and bare, but that which works by love; **/196/** and the faith that is accounted to him is that which, although it does not yet have the opportunity for working, nevertheless has the perfect desire for working. For the robber's faith was accounted to him for righteousness, which, although with the moment of death impending it could have no opportunity for working, was nevertheless judged so perfect by the Examiner of the heart that it was rewarded that very day with a dwelling-place in paradise with him.[11] The faith of Cornelius and his house was accounted to him for righteousness to such an extent that even before the baptism of rebirth he received the gift of the Holy Spirit, because without a doubt as soon as it was conceived in his heart, it was ready to work by love.[12] So also the faith of Abraham proved how far it availed to be accounted for righteousness, when it was even prepared to offer his only son as a burnt offering at the command of the Lord. *The just man, therefore, lives by faith*[13] – by that faith certainly which is prepared to work by love and, if it has the opportunity, does work.

[15:7] And he said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldees so that I might give you this land, and so that you might possess it. Some people assert that Ur is the name of a place. But since Ur means 'fire', it ought rather to be understood in accordance with Hebrew tradition that Abram, as I have also said above,[14] was rescued from the fire of the Chaldees, who wished to destroy him by fire because he had refused to worship and adore the fire which they worshipped as God. But with God as his protection they were unable to do this.

[15:8] But he said, Lord God, whereby can I know that I shall possess it? After the statement, *He believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness*,[15] Abraham must not be thought *to have failed in his faith, when he said*, *'Lord God, whereby can I know that I shall possess it?'*[16]

10 Augustine, *DCD* 16.23 (CCSL 48, 525).

11 Cf. Luke 23:39-43.

12 Cf. Acts 10:1-4.

13 Rom. 1:17; cf. Habakkuk 2:4; Gal. 3:11; Hebr. 10:38.

14 *In Gen.* 3.845-51; 891-97 (above, pp. 242 and 243–44).

15 Gen. 15:6.

16 Augustine, *DCD* 16.24 (CCSL 48, 526). Bede substitutes the Vulgate text for the Old-Latin version offered by Augustine, which he then quotes below.

For he does not, as if still in a state of unbelief, seek a sign in which to believe, but he entreats *that some symbol of what he already believed in might be offered, whereby the manner of it should be revealed*.[17] Hence, the old translation has more plainly, *'Lord, Lord, how may I know that I will be its heir?' Likewise, it is not lack of faith on the Virgin Mary's part when she says, 'How will this be, seeing that I know not a man?'*[18] *For she knew* **/197/** *that it was going to happen, but she asked about the manner in which it was to be done, and when she asked this, she heard. Here too, finally, a symbol of animals was presented – the heifer, the she-goat, the ram, and the two birds, a turtle-dove and a pigeon – so that he might know that what he had no doubt would happen would happen in accordance with these symbols.*[19] For this follows:

[15:9-10] And the Lord answered and said, Take me a heifer of three years old and a she-goat of three and a ram of three years, a turtle-dove also and a pigeon. And he took all these and divided them in the middle and laid the two pieces of each one against the other; but he did not divide the birds. For *the heifer may have signified the people placed under the yoke of the Law, the she-goat the same people as sinners in the future, and the ram the same people again as they were going to reign. These animals are said to be 'of three', because* in the third age of the world *that people came to maturity* and entered the Promised Land. (Of course, the first age extends *from Adam to Noah*, the second from Noah *to Abraham* himself, and the third from Abraham *to David*, in which age the people were saved from Egyptian servitude and removed to the Promised Land.)[20] *Or these animals may better suit some other interpretation, but I have absolutely no doubt that spiritual beings are prefigured by the addition of the turtle-dove and the pigeon. And for that reason it is said, 'but he did not divide the birds', because carnal creatures are divided from one another, but not spiritual beings – whether like the turtle-dove they remove themselves from the commercial affairs of men, or like the pigeon they live amid them. Yet both these birds are simple and harmless, signifying that among these same Israelites to whom that land was to be given, there would be individual* peoples *of the promise and heirs of the kingdom, who would abide in eternal happiness*.[21]

17 Augustine, *DCD* 16.24 (CCSL 48, 526).
18 Luke 1:34.
19 Augustine, *DCD* 16.24 (CCSL 48, 526–27).
20 Cf. *In Gen.* 1.1093-1224 (above, pp. 100–105).
21 Augustine, *DCD* 16.24 (CCSL 48, 527).

[15:11] And the birds came down upon the carcasses and Abram drove them away. These divided birds, which came down upon those that were carcasses, *do not signify anything good, but rather the spirits of this lower air, looking for their own food, as one might say, from this division of carnal creatures*.[22] Or indeed they indicate the same people's carnal adversaries, who, according to the counsel of Balaam the soothsayer about their crimes, hunted for a favourable opportunity of victory for themselves.[23] Of these adversaries, the Prophet says, *Our persecutors were swifter than the eagles of heaven*.[24] **/198/** But *Abram drove them away*, because by his merits Israel was often freed both from the distress of temporal evils and from the snares of evil spirits. And the verse that is added,

[15:12] And when the sun was setting, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a great and dark horror seized upon him, signifies a great disorder at the end of this age and the coming tribulation of the faithful, concerning which the Lord says in the Gospel, *For there shall be then great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning*.[25]

[15:13] And it was said to him, Know beforehand that your seed shall be a stranger in a land not their own, and they shall subject them to slavery and afflict them four hundred years, and so forth. This *is a very clear prophecy about the people of Israel who were to be enslaved in Egypt. It is not that the people were going to be a full four hundred years in slavery under the Egyptians undergoing afflictions, but rather it is prophesied that this slavery would happen in the course of four hundred years. … Four hundred years, indeed, is stated as a round number, although the number is actually somewhat greater, whether it is reckoned from the time when these promises were made to Abraham, or from the time when Isaac was born, because he was the seed of Abraham, about which these prophecies are made. For … four hundred and thirty years are reckoned from Abraham's seventy-fifth year, when the first promise was made to him, to the departure of Israel from Egypt, as the Apostle recalls when he says, 'Now this I say, that the testament which was confirmed by God, the Law which was made after four hundred and thirty years, does not annul, to make the promise of no effect'*.[26] *Therefore this number four hundred and thirty, which was not much greater, could at that time be called four hundred. How much*

22 Augustine, *DCD* 16.24 (CCSL 48, 527).
23 Cf. Num. 22–24.
24 Lam. 4:19.
25 Matt. 24:21.
26 Gal. 3:17.

more readily could this be done after some of this number had already gone by, when these things were revealed and said to Abraham in a vision, or when Isaac was born to his father at the age of one hundred, twenty-five years after the first promise, when of this four hundred and thirty only four hundred and five remained, which the Lord chose to call four hundred.[27]

[15:16a] But in the fourth generation they shall return hither. *Kohath, with his father Levi, entered Egypt*. His son was *Amram*, **/199/** whose son was *Aaron*, whose son was *Eleazar*, who, since he was fourth from Kohath, *went out from Egypt with his father Aaron*,[28] and after his father died in the wilderness, he himself entered the Promised Land.[29]

[15:17] And when the sun was set, there arose a dark mist, and there appeared a smoking furnace, and a lamp of fire passing between those divisions. The fact that this mist and the furnace of fire arose after sunset *signifies that at the end of the world carnal men are then to be judged by fire. For just as the affliction of the city of God, the like of which has never been seen before, which is expected in the future under the Antichrist, is signified by Abraham's 'dark' fear around sunset,*[30] *that is, when the end of the world approaches, so also, at sunset, that is, at the very end, this fire signifies the day of Judgement, which will separate the carnal men who are to be saved by fire from those who are to be damned in fire*.[31]

[15:18] On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, To your seed will I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. This does not mean *the great river of Egypt, that is, the Nile, but the small* river, which *divides Egypt from Palestine, where the city of Rhinocorura is found*.[32] Therefore *the Lord made a covenant with Abram on that day*, whereby he offered him sacrificial victims of animals and birds. The covenant, of course, was that he and his offspring would always make votive offerings of prayers and victims with a faithful heart, and that the Lord would give to him and his offspring the land of Canaan in perpetual possession.

[16:1-4] Now Sarai the wife of Abram had brought forth no children. But having a handmaid, an Egyptian, named Hagar, she said to her husband, Behold, the Lord has restrained me from bearing. Go in unto

27 Augustine, *DCD* 16.24 (CCSL 48, 527–28).
28 Jerome, *Ep*. 36; cf. Num. 26:57-60.
29 Cf. Deut. 10:6.
30 Cf. Gen. 15:12.
31 Augustine, *DCD* 16.24 (CCSL 48, 528); cf. 1 Cor. 3:12-15.
32 Augustine, *DCD* 16.24 (CCSL 48, 528).

my handmaid; perhaps I may have children of her at least. And when he agreed to her request, she took Hagar the Egyptian her handmaid, ten years after he first dwelt in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband to wife. And he went in to her. But she, perceiving that she was with child, despised her mistress, and so forth. In Galatians the Apostle has discussed very fully how Hagar and Ishmael signify the Synagogue and the Old Covenant, **/200/** just as Sarah and her son Isaac signify the Church and the New Covenant.[33] *Now as far as the facts are concerned, Abraham cannot be branded with guilt in connection with this concubine. The truth is, he used her to beget offspring, not to satisfy his lust, not insulting but rather obeying his wife, who believed that it would be a consolation for her own sterility if she voluntarily made her handmaid's fertile womb her own, since she could not be fertile by nature. And so the woman used the right the Apostle refers to when he says, 'Likewise also the man has no power over his body, but the woman',*[34] *in order to give birth from another, because she could not from herself. … Finally, when the pregnant handmaid lorded it over her sterile mistress, and Sarah, with the jealousy of a woman, put the blame rather on her husband, even there Abraham showed that he was not a lover but an honourable father, and that he had guarded the modesty of his wife Sarah in regard to Hagar, and had not carried out his desire, but hers. … For he says*,[35]

[16:6b] Behold your handmaid is in your own hand, use her as it pleases you.

[16:7-8b] And the angel having found her sitting by a fountain of water in the wilderness, which is on the way to Shur, he said to her, Hagar, handmaid of Sarai, where do you come from and whither are you going? *It is appropriate that the Egyptian handmaid hastened to go on the way to Shur, which leads through the desert to Egypt.*[36] *For the desert of Shur stretches to the Red Sea, which extends to the borders of Egypt*.[37]

[16:11a/b] Behold, he said, you are with child, and you shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Ishmael. *Ishmael means 'catching the sound of God'*.[38] And the reason for the name is explained when it is immediately added:

33 Cf. Gal. 4:22-31.
34 1 Cor. 7:4, from Augustine.
35 Augustine, *DCD* 16.25 (CCSL 48, 529).
36 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 16.7 (CCSL 72, 20).
37 Jerome, *De situ* (PL 23, 919).
38 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 16.11 (CCSL 72, 20).

[16:11c] Because the Lord has heard your affliction. Moreover, it should be observed that the first son Ishmael received his name from the Lord before he was born, as did the second son Isaac, undoubtedly for the sake of a settled mystery, because the heirs both of the Old Covenant, which is signified by Ishmael, and of the New, which is signified by Isaac, were foreknown among the divinely elect before their times.[39] **/201/**

[16:12] He will be a wild man, his hand will be against all men, and all men's hands against him, and he will pitch his tents over against all his brethren. *This means that Ishmael's seed was to dwell in the desert, and without fixed habitations. These are the nomadic Saracens*[40] *who raid all the peoples on the edge of the desert, and who are attacked by all*.[41] But this was long ago. Now, however, *his hand* is *against all men, and all men's hands* are *against him*, to such an extent that the Saracens hold the whole breadth of Africa in their sway, and they also hold the greatest part of Asia and some part of Europe, hateful and hostile to all.[42] The phrase, *he will pitch his tents*, reveals the ancient custom of a people who always used to live in tents rather than houses.

[16:13-14a] And she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You the God who have seen me. For she said, Truly here have I seen the hinder parts of him that sees me. Therefore she called that well, the well of him that lives and sees me. It is clear from these words that Hagar was unable to see the face of the angel who was speaking with her, but only his hinder parts when he was going away. But she knew that he, taking pity, had seen her, and that he was the living, that is, the true God, or that he had come to her on behalf of the living God. And the sagacity of the woman is wonderful, or rather it is not to be wondered at since she belonged to the household of Abraham, because she wanted the well, next to which she was comforted by the divine vision, to be called after the name of that same God. It was as if she clearly understood that the well signified the profound mysteries of divine providence, in accordance with which he took pity on her affliction, and ordered her to return to her mistress, but foretold that her posterity was going to be great.[43] And just as she saw in that well or fountain,

39 The allegory, which is etymological, is settled (*certi*), because God gave Ishmael and Isaac their names. That is, it is not based on human interpretation that can vary from one commentator to another. This conforms to Bede's tentative distinction between sign and symbol. See Introduction, pp. 13–14.

40 Jerome, of course, refers to the pre-Islamic peoples of the Syrian-Arabian deserts.

41 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 16.12 (CCSL 72, 21).

42 On Bede's application of the term 'Saracens' to Islamic Arabs, see Introduction, p. 26.

43 Cf. Gen. 16:10.

as it was called above,[44] the living and unfailing water, so she understood the depth of the divine Being, always living and enduring without end and beginning, and she believed that the well ought properly to be named for it. The Psalmist showed that he was in agreement with this allegorical figure, when, after saying, *As the hart pants after the fountains of water, so my soul pants after you, O God*, he immediately added, *My soul has thirsted after the living God*,[45] in order that we might conclude that just as fountains have living and inexhaustible waters, so God has enduring life **/202/** in himself. It should be noted that *the well of Hagar is between* the desert of *Kadesh and Bered and is pointed out today*,[46] and deservedly so, obviously in witness of her confession of faith.

[17:1-2] And after he was ninety and nine years old, the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, I am the Almighty God. Walk before me and be perfect, and I will make a covenant between me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly. Thus, in his hundredth year, the name of Abraham is amplified, *the covenant of circumcision* is given,[47] and the birth of Isaac is promised, so that in a great mystery he may receive the son of promise as a centenarian already circumcised. And he walks before the Lord so that he can be perfect – he who remembers that he stands in the sight of the divine Being at every moment and that he has been placed, as it were, in his service, like Elijah, who says, *The Lord lives, in whose sight I stand*.[48] He indicated that he always kept in mind the presence of his Creator in order that his service to the divine might be prompt. And since the first step of perfection is humility, it is rightly added,

[17:3] Abram fell flat on his face. Now we read in earlier passages of the sacred narrative that holy men invoked the Lord, that they offered sacrificial victims in his praise, and that they lived innocently in his sight, but not that anyone before Abram fell flat on his face before the Lord. And in truth, as he received greater gifts than his predecessors, so he returned greater thanks to the dispenser of the gifts by humbling himself. And since he remembered his frailty when he fell humbly to the ground, he deserved to know soon afterwards and to the highest degree the greatness of divine power. For this follows,

[17:4a/b] And God said to him, I am, and my covenant is with you. The only reason for the Lord to say, *I am*, is to proclaim openly the fact of

44 Cf. Gen. 16:7.
45 Ps. 41:2-3 (42:1-2).
46 Jerome, *De situ* (PL 23, 879); Gen. 16:14.
47 Acts 7:8.
48 1 Kings/3 Kings 17:1.

his eternal Being, in that he is always the same. In this regard the Psalm likewise declares, *But you are always the selfsame*.[49] Moreover, this passage harmonizes with that of the Gospel, where the Lord said to the Jews, *Before Abraham was made, I am*.[50] For, appearing in the flesh, he taught that it was he himself who had once appeared to Abraham in the spirit, when he repeats the same testimony of his Being that he had given to Abraham by giving it to the Jews. But the Jews became unruly **/203/** after they heard, *Before Abraham was made, I am*, whereas when Abraham heard, *I am*, he rejoiced, nor did he doubt that God existed before he himself was made. Hence, because he heard the word of the divine eternal Being in a state of faith, he received an additional reward – namely that he would not only be called, but would be, the father of many nations. But the Jews were cast out from the stock of Abraham and counted among *the offspring of vipers*,[51] because they were unable to comprehend the mysteries of the Divine that they heard. Furthermore, *they took up stones to cast at him,* but he *hid himself* from them *and went out of the temple*.[52] He did this so that, once he had hidden himself from their stony hearts and gone out, he might come to reveal a knowledge of his majesty to the Gentiles. For it was also at this time, after having gone out from the temple, that he restored light to the man who was born blind,[53] assuredly as an allegorical figure of the grace with which he was going to illumine the hearts of the Gentiles. This follows:

[17:4c-5] And you shall be a father of many nations. Neither shall your name be called any more Abram; but you shall be called Abraham, because I have made you a father of many nations. Since the blessed Abraham forsook his kindred and the house of his father at the Lord's command, he learned deservedly, by way of recompense, that he would become the father of many nations – of so many indeed, that he would become the father not only of those nations that came forth from his seed according to the flesh, but also of those that followed the tracks of his faith and obedience, even though they derived their fleshly origin from elsewhere, as the Apostle, writing to the Romans, fully explains.[54] And it is important to know that *Abram* means '*distinguished father*' but *Abraham* means '*the father of many*', with '*nations*' being understood.[55]

49 Ps. 101:28 (102:27).
50 John 8:58.
51 Luke 3:7.
52 John 8:59.
53 Cf. John 9:1-7.
54 Cf. Rom. 4.
55 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 17.3-5 (CCSL 72, 21).

[17:7] And I will establish my covenant between me and you, and between your seed after you in their generations, by a perpetual covenant, that I may be your God and your seed's after you. The old translation has, *And I will establish my testament*.[56] And *it should be noted that, wherever in the Greek we read 'testament', it is in the same place 'covenant' or 'pact',*[57] *that is, 'berith', in the Hebrew language*.[58] Nor should it be a puzzle why God's testament or pact with Abraham and his seed is *by a perpetual covenant*, that he may be their God, since this covenant will certainly not only be preserved for the whole time of this life in the generations **/204/** of the elect following each other in order without any interruption, but it will also be celebrated in the age to come eternally. And this follows,

[17:8] And I will give to you and to your seed the land wherein you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan for a perpetual possession. *How this may be taken as fulfilled, or whether its fulfilment is still awaited, since no nation can possess any earthly thing eternally* requires a more laborious explanation. But it should be known that *'eternal' is our word for what the Greeks call 'aeonion', which is derived from the word for 'age', for in fact the word for 'age'* [*seculum*] *in Greek is 'aion'. But our Latin translators have not ventured to use the word 'secular' for it for fear of going far astray from its meaning. Indeed, many things are called 'secular' that take place in this age in such a way that they also pass away, so to speak, in a short time. But what is called 'aeonion' either has no end or persists to the end of this age*.[59] And therefore, as I said above,[60] the land of Canaan is given in eternal possession to the seed of Abraham, since it is thought that Christians, which is to say, the seed of Abraham whether from the Jews or from the Gentiles, will never be absent from it.

[17:9-11] Again God said to Abraham, And you therefore shall keep my covenant, and your seed after you in their generations. This is my covenant which you shall observe between me and you and your seed after you. All the male kind of you shall be circumcised. And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, that it may be for a sign of the covenant between me and you. With generous foresight the Lord first establishes the covenant of his grace with Abraham and his seed, and then

56 As in Augustine, *DCD* 16.26 (CCSL 48, 530); the 'old translation' is the Septuagint.

57 I.e., *foedus siue pactum*. These terms are used interchangeably in the Vulgate, and both are translated 'covenant' in the Douay-Rheims version.

58 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 17.3 (PL 23, 963); 'in the Greek' refers to the Septuagint.

59 Augustine, *DCD* 16.26 (CCSL 48, 531).

60 *In Gen.* 3.1347-58 (above, p. 257).

demands of them a covenant of obedience, so that, having first heard of the gift of eternal recompense, they may not be frightened by the hardship of circumcision. Therefore, the flesh of the foreskin is ordered to be circumcised as a sign of the covenant between God and men, so that by this sign the faithful of that time were admonished that they should *cleanse* themselves *from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit*, in order that they might *perfect sanctification in the fear of God*.[61] But in a deeper mystery that carnal circumcision was also brought into being as a sign of the covenant between God and the seed of Abraham, since it was certainly given as a sign of that covenant concerning which it was said above to this same Abraham, *And in you shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed*,[62] which none of the faithful doubts pertains **/205/** to the grace of the New Covenant. Therefore none of the faithful doubts that Abraham and his seed were circumcised in the flesh of their foreskin as a sign of this covenant, in order that it might be prefigured typologically that he would be born from that seed, who would cleanse his chosen ones from all stain of sins, and endow them with eternal blessing. What follows is aptly suited to this rite of cleansing:

[17:12a] An infant of eight days old shall be circumcised among you. For the Lord *rose up* from the dead *on the eighth day*, that *is, after the Sabbath*.[63] And in remembrance of his passion and resurrection we are baptized, being freed from the long continuance of our vices as if renewed by a spiritual circumcision, as the Apostle explains when he says, *For all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism into death, that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life*.[64] The number eight is also particularly suited to the time of our resurrection, when, having been universally clothed in the everlasting life of the flesh, which we laid aside in death, we will no longer suffer any sin in the flesh, nor any corruption. Furthermore, our resurrection is appropriately prefigured by the number of the eighth day, because it will take place after the six ages of this world and the seventh age of eternal repose, that is, the rest of souls, which is now celebrated in the other life. Therefore, infants were ordered to be circumcised on the eighth day as a sign of the divine covenant, so that it might be made known mystically that all the elect were by the grace of God to be freed in this number from all sins, to be cleansed from all corruption

61 2 Cor. 7:1.
62 Gen. 12:3.
63 Augustine, *DCD* 16.26 (CCSL 48, 531).
64 Rom. 6:3-4.

of the flesh, and to be freed from that death, which they incurred through the sin of the first transgression.

[17:12b/d] Every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house as well as the bought servant, shall be circumcised, and whoever is not of your stock. This signifies that the grace of rebirth and eternal life applies to all the faithful, whether they derive in the flesh from the stock of Abraham or from elsewhere.

[17:13] And my covenant shall be in your flesh for a perpetual covenant. This covenant certainly seems to signify that, **/206/** 'I am going to clothe both your body and your spirit in perpetual renewal and eternal life'.

[17:14] The male whose flesh of his foreskin shall not be circumcised, that soul shall be destroyed out of his people, because he has broken my covenant. With this statement a greater mystery of that circumcision is put forward, that it is not only the sign of the renewal to come in Christ, but also of the abolition of the transgression made in Adam. For what baptism in the faith of Christ now does, was at that time done by circumcision on the eighth day, which signified the resurrection of Christ. However, the entrance of the heavenly kingdom did not lie open to the circumcised until, rising again from death, the Lord unbolted the gate of that kingdom to all of the elect by ascending to heaven. The chief reason they were circumcised on the eighth day was so that it might be signified allegorically that they would not be truly cleansed of all stain of their sins except by the decisive act of the Lord's resurrection. But *there may be some puzzlement as to what 'that soul shall be destroyed out of his people, because he has broken my covenant' means,*[65] *since it is in no way the fault of the infant whose soul he said was going to perish. Nor is it he* who has broken God's covenant, *but his elders, who did not take care to circumcise him. It is a puzzle, unless it is understood that even infants, not on account of the particular manner of their own life, but on account of the common origin of the human race,* have all broken God's covenant *in that one man 'in whom all have sinned'*.[66] … Therefore*, since circumcision was a sign of regeneration and procreation deservedly brings perdition on the infant because of the original sin by which God's* covenant *was first broken, unless* a liberation *sets him free, these divine words must be interpreted as if they said something like, 'Whoever has not been regenerated, that soul* shall be destroyed *from among* his people', *because* he broke God's covenant *when, he too sinned in Adam, together with all mankind*.[67]

65 Augustine quotes this verse from the Old-Latin text; Bede from the Vulgate.

66 Rom. 5:12.

67 Augustine, *DCD* 16.27 (CCSL 48, 531–32).

[17:15-16] And the Lord said to Abraham, Sarai your wife you shall not call Sarai, but Sarah. And I will bless her and of her I will give you a son whom I will bless, and he shall become nations and kings of people shall spring from him. *Here are more explicit promises about the calling of the Gentiles in* **/207/** *Isaac, that is, in the son of promise, who signifies not nature, but grace, because he is promised as the son of an old man and a sterile old woman. For although God also works in the natural process of procreation, still, when God's work is evident where nature is decayed and ceasing to operate, then his grace is the more evident. And since this will happen not by generation, but by regeneration, for that reason circumcision was commanded at this time, when a son was promised from Sarah. … The names of the parents are also changed, all things resound with newness, and the New Covenant is foreshadowed in the Old*.[68] Moreover, *Sarai* means '*my princess*', and *Sarah*, '*princess*'.[69] The reason her name was changed is that formerly she was called 'my princess', that is, the mistress of one household alone, but hereafter she is called simply 'princess', because of the following words: '*and of her I will give you a son whom I will bless, and he shall become nations and kings of people shall spring from him*'. *And clearly it is not, as we read in the Greek, 'God said to Abraham, your wife Sarai will not be called Sarai'. In Hebrew it is, 'You will not call her name Sarai', that is, you will not say to her, 'you are my princess', for she is now to be the princess of all nations*.[70] Hence the apostle Peter, instituting the way of life of women, says, *For after this manner heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in the Lord, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are, doing well, and not fearing any disturbance*.[71]

[17:17] Abraham fell upon his face and laughed, saying in his heart, Shall a son, think you, be born to him that is a hundred years old, and shall Sarah that is ninety years old bring forth? *Abraham's laughter is the exultation of one giving thanks, not the derision of a scoffer, and the words* that he said *in his* heart … *are not those of doubt but of wonder*.[72] The Apostle also bears witness when, speaking of him, he says, *In the promise also of God he staggered not by distrust, but was strengthened in faith,*

68 Augustine, *DCD* 16.26 (CCSL 48, 530–31).

69 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 71–72); Jerome, *Hebr. quaest.* 17.15 (CCSL 72, 21).

70 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 17.16 (CCSL 72, 21).

71 1 Peter 3:5-6.

72 Augustine, *DCD* 16.26 (CCSL 48, 531).

giving glory to God, most fully knowing that whatsoever he has promised, he is able also to perform.[73]

[17:19a/b] And the Lord said to Abraham, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. *Isaac means* **/208/** *'laughter',*[74] and there is no doubt that he was called so from the fact that Abraham laughed *in his heart*[75] when he heard of his birth. Moreover, that laughter appropriately signifies the joy of the New Covenant, in which *the children of promise*[76] will rejoice forever with the Lord dwelling in them. For this is what follows,

[17:19c] And I will establish a covenant with him for a perpetual covenant, and with his seed after him, and so forth. 'His seed' refers to those who, by imitating the faith of Abraham, deserve to hear from the Lord, *Blessed are you who now weep, for you shall laugh*.[77] Lending his weight to these words, the Apostle says, *Now we, as Isaac was, are the children of promise*.[78] And in particular, the name Isaac, that is, 'laughter', he who is born of the promise, is suited to *the mediator of God and men*,[79] of whose birth the angel said to the shepherds, *Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people*.[80]

[17:24-25] Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he circumcised the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was full thirteen years old at the time of his circumcision. Why is it that Abraham was in his hundredth year and Ishmael was thirteen years old when they were circumcised, so that when Isaac was born a year later, Abraham had perfectly fulfilled one hundred years of age and Ishmael fourteen, that is, twice seven? These things surely happened for the sake of a great mystery, namely that Isaac prefigured the New Covenant and Ishmael the Old. For when Isaac was born, his father was a centenarian, so that it may be revealed that he will bring the children of his promise to the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom by the grace of the New Covenant. Indeed the number one hundred, as has often been said, passes in finger counting from the left hand to the right;[81] and the heavenly

73 Rom. 4:20-21.
74 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 17.17 (CCSL 72, 22).
75 Gen. 17:17.
76 Gal. 4:28.
77 Luke 6:21.
78 Gal. 4:28.
79 1 Tim. 2:5.
80 Luke 2:10.
81 *In Gen.* 3.718-20 (above, p. 238), etc.

Jerusalem, our celestial mother, is deservedly signified by the right hand, for all those who are permitted to enter her are going to stand at the right hand of the Judge in the Last Judgement. By the time of Isaac's birth, Ishmael had completed two sets of seven years, for the sake certainly of the sacrament of the Sabbath that was observed in the Old Covenant. Consequently, Isaac was born at the beginning of the fifteenth year, as if in a sign of the resurrection, that is to say, of the true circumcision, whereby it was made evident allegorically that the grace and the truth that were wrought by Jesus Christ would succeed the transient observance of the Law that was given **/209/** by Moses. Therefore, at the time of the birth of Isaac, who prefigured the grace of the New Covenant, his older brother Ishmael, who signified the Old Covenant, had completed the number seven in his own age, because it was fitting for the observance of the Law, in which the Sabbath held the chief place, to be extended up to the time of grace. And the fact that the same number seven was doubled points to the perfection of that sacrament, in that the Law of God requires that we be free from servile things, that is, from wicked deeds in the body and noxious thoughts in the mind. The number seven is doubled because the Law not only ordains rest for the bodies of those following it in this life, but also promises that their souls will have rest in the life to come. After Isaac is born and as he is beginning the first year of his life, Ishmael begins his fifteenth year, because, as the grace of the Gospel was making its appearance, the Law itself, spiritually understood, was found to have been full of the divine sacraments, and to have foretold the glory of the resurrection. As to the fact that later, when Isaac had grown, Ishmael was cast out with his mother at Sarah's command, it must certainly not be thought to signify that the Old Covenant is to be set aside by the succession of the New Covenant, but rather that the carnal observation of the Law, together with those who contend that it should be observed carnally despite the gleaming grace of the Gospel, should be expelled from the bounds of the Church. But the Law itself, understood in a spiritual sense, is not to lose *one jot* or *tittle till all be fulfilled*.[82]

[18:1] And the Lord appeared to him in the vale of Mambre as he was sitting at the door of his tent in the very heat of the day, and so forth. This appearance of the Lord is undoubtedly more mystical than all those recorded above, whereby he was seen so often by the blessed Abraham. After receiving the sacrament of circumcision, and after the augmentation of his name by which it was signified that he was to be the father of all nations,

82 Matt. 5:18.

he rightly learns the deeper mysteries of God. Since, as is evident, not only the circumcision but also the foreskin[83] was destined to be a sharer of these mysteries, the appearance is rightly said to have happened in the vale of Mambre. For Mambre, as we read above, was an Amorite by stock, but was federated with his brothers with Abraham.[84] Hence, the vale of Mambre fittingly signifies our humility – we who, taking the origin of our flesh from the Gentiles, have Abraham as our father in spirit and faith; **/210/** we to whom the Apostle, deriving the origin both of his flesh and virtue from Abraham, says, *We declare unto you the life eternal, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. That which we have seen and have heard, we also declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us*.[85]

And, indeed, in this passage, quite apart from the spiritual understanding, it greatly edifies readers that Abraham, seeing the unknown men, immediately *ran to meet them* as if he was going to offer the grace of hospitality to strangers, that approaching them humbly *he adored down to the ground*,[86] and that he asked them to await and receive his service which he hastened to provide them when they gave their assent. Nor did he do this through his manservants and maidservants, but by himself and Sarah. Now, if he did not believe that they were men when he first saw them, it is astonishing why he wanted to bring water to wash their feet; how he expected them to rest under the tree as though they were weary from walking; and why he asked them to strengthen their heart by restoring their body,[87] as though they were oppressed by hunger.[88] But anyone who undertakes to investigate this passage at greater depth will find the whole of it to savour of spiritual meanings. For the fact that the Lord appeared to Abraham as he was sitting in the door of his tent is well suited to the piety of Abraham himself and of all the heirs of that promise who show themselves to be strangers of this world and inhabitants, indeed citizens, of the other life, that is, of the heavenly fatherland. Certainly, we ordinarily use tents on a journey or in war, and a house in our native land. As part of the same mystery, we read that Isaac and Jacob also dwelt in tents. And whoever remains inside his tent knows that he is a stranger and that he

83 'The circumcision … the foreskin', i.e. 'Jew … Gentile'.

84 Cf. Gen. 14:13. Bede does not quote the clause of this verse that mentions 'the vale of Mambre the Amorite' and the federation of Mambre and his brothers with Abraham.

85 1 John 1:2-3.

86 Gen. 18:2.

87 Reading *cor corpus reficiendo confortare*. See Appendix 2: 4.584. Cf. Gen. 18:5: *ponam bucellam panis et confortate cor vestrum*, 'I will set a morsel of bread, and strengthen ye your heart'.

88 Gen. 18:4-5.

is not always going to live in this world, but just the same he does not blush to involve himself as much as he can in the affairs and allurements of the world. But Abraham and his followers, who act only from necessity and not also out of pleasure, which are things of this world, *sit* as it were *in the door of their tent*, because, being at every moment prepared to go out from the world, they await the entrance to the next life with a spirit always joyful and straining toward the rewards to come. And the phrase, *in the very heat of the day*, is justly appended – certainly *the heat of the day* in which Abraham *sat in the door of his tent* signifies the virtue of love, with which he burned in spirit out of regard for **/211/** the *Sun of justice*.[89] And such a position both of place and time was fitting for him who was going to see the Lord and have the benefit of conversation with him, in whom was prefigured the stranger of this world who is illumined by the light of true, that is, heavenly grace, and eagerly inflamed with love of divine contemplation.

[18:2-3] And when he had lifted up his eyes, there appeared to him three men standing near him. And as soon as he saw them he ran to meet them from the door of his tent and adored down to the ground. And he said, Lord, if I have found favour in your sight, pass not away from your servant, and so forth. The fact that *three men appeared to him* is a mystery of the holy Trinity. Then, after he had seen the three, he adored and called upon one Lord, because although there is a Trinity in persons, nevertheless there is in the divine an equality of the power which is unique and to be worshipped singly, just as in Isaiah when the angelic powers sing the glory of the holy Trinity, saying, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, they immediately refer to the unity of the power and divine nature [*dominationis ac deitatis*] by adding, *Lord God* [*Dominus Deus*] *omnipotent, all the earth is full of his glory*.[90] It is well said that in order to see the angels Abraham lifted up his eyes, because it is certainly necessary for anyone who longs to see the citizens of heaven and to know the glory and the mysteries of the divine Majesty to lift up all his mental gaze from base desires and to open it with a diligent effort to the light of the true Sun. And it is well to add that when he had seen the angels, *he ran to meet them* in adoration, and begged that they not pass away from him, because, whenever we acquire in our heart any taste of inward sweetness, it is necessary that we immediately busy ourselves with every form of prayer and step promptly with good works, lest that sweetness desert us too quickly. But what was tasted at just the right moment may revive our minds

89 Malach. 4:2.
90 Isa. 6:3.

with the memory of divine sweetness somewhat longer, and support them with the contemplation of eternal things, after they have been withdrawn from the delights and cares of this world.

Some people may be puzzled how it is that both Abraham in this passage and Lot in the following one, seeing angels, received them with hospitality as though they were indeed men, and refreshed them with human food as though they were mortals; and yet they spoke with them as if with God, and took their words as messages from heaven. But *it is likely*, as St Augustine **/212/** says, *that Abraham recognized the Lord in the three men, and Lot in the two. They spoke to him in the singular, even though they thought that they were in the company of men. And they took them in as they did for no other reason than to minister to them as mortals in need of human refreshment. But assuredly there was some way in which they so excelled, although they seemed like men, that those who offered them hospitality could not doubt that the Lord was in them, as is often the case in the prophets. This is why they sometimes addressed them in the plural, and sometimes they addressed the Lord in them in the singular. But Scripture states that they were angels, not only in this book of Genesis where these events are narrated, but also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it says, in praising hospitality, 'Even by this some have received angels with hospitality unawares'*.[91] But also, in this reception, we can think it fitting that it was divinely ordained that when they saw the angels the patriarchs received them as men indeed, but worshipped them as if they were God, since by the distinction between such submission and devotion it was prefigured that some day it would happen that the Lord himself, appearing in the flesh, would be satisfied with fleshly food and receive human hospitality, but that in the course of this hospitality he would devote himself more to preaching and healing the sick than to eating and drinking, as very frequently happened according to the Gospel narrative. And then the exegetes of sacred Scripture understood that in this passage was fulfilled what the Lord said to the Jews, *Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see my day; and saw and was glad*.[92] Indeed, he saw the day of the Lord when, *seeing three* angels, *he adored one*, and he spoke to the Lord, because in the distinction of three persons he recognized the essence of one Majesty.[93] He refreshed them by serving them with food, because he

91 Augustine, *DCD* 16.29 (CCSL 48, 534–35); Hebr. 13:2 (quoted from Augustine).

92 John 8:56. Abraham's action, which is temporally prior to Jesus's statement in the gospel of John, is presented as fulfilling Jesus's words. That is, Christ's words are thought of as existing as a kind of eternal prophecy, which is validated when Abraham speaks.

93 Isidore, *Quaestiones* 1.14.6 (PL 83, 243). Isidore quotes John 8:56, but not, as Bede does, from the Vulgate text.

understood that one was going to be born from his seed who, although he is God before the world began, consubstantial with the Father, and a true man at the end of the world, would truly appear to live among men. And the foods with which he refreshed them are themselves also filled with spiritual sacraments, concerning which the narrative reads as follows:

[18:6-7] Abraham made haste into the tent to Sarah and said to her, Make haste, combine three measures of flour, and make loaves of bread baked in ashes. And he himself ran to the herd, and took from thence a calf very tender and very good, and gave it to a young man, who made haste and boiled it. **/213/** Here it should first be noted that everything is done swiftly as if truly in the service of a divine reception. Abraham hastens, he orders Sarah to hasten, the servant hastily fulfils the duty enjoined upon him, so that it is clearly revealed that the blessed Abraham, in accordance with the words of the Lord, truly '*rejoiced that he might see* his *day; and saw and was glad*'.[94] But also all who are touched in their heart out of respect for divine grace immediately leap forward with joyful steps of good works and thoughts in submission to the divine will, and rouse themselves and their followers with zealous exhortation to hasten carrying out the heavenly commands. The flour, therefore, that Sarah combined to refresh the angels is the inward sweetness of the words of God, which the Prophet promises to the heavenly Jerusalem, that is, to the holy Church, when he says of the Lord, *Who has placed peace in your borders, filling you also with the fat of the grain*.[95] And to explain more clearly what the fat of the grain was, he immediately added, *Who sends forth his speech to the earth*.[96] And there are three measures of this flour, because in Holy Scripture there are three levels of meaning: namely, the historical, the typological [*allegoricus*], and the anagogical.[97] For example: *I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of your house*.[98] On the historical level David desired the beauty of the house, which Solomon made for the Lord, to remain inviolable, praising him in it to his people. On the typological level he desired the beauty of the holy Church, to whom the Apostle says, 'For you are the temple of God',[99] to shine through

94 John 8:56.

95 Ps. 147:14.

96 Ps. 147:15.

97 Bede invokes threefold allegory to suit the three measures of flour of his text, omitting the tropological or moral sense which he includes in his exposition of allegory in *DST* 2.2.236-39 (CCSL 123A, 166). See Introduction, pp. 9–11.

98 Ps. 25:8 (26:8).

99 2 Cor. 6:16.

the whole world. On the anagogical level, that is, the sense leading to higher things, he wished to see the beauty of the house of the heavenly fatherland, which is, of course, not made by the hand of man, but is eternal in heaven. The Lord also mentions this system of threefold measures of understanding, when he says in the Gospel parable, *The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened*.[100] For the woman hides the leaven of the Gospel in three measures of meal so that the whole may be leavened, whenever holy Church, which Sarah signifies in this passage, either proclaims history in the Scriptures, or unveils allegory, or lifts up **/214/** its interpretive eye to the contemplation of heavenly things, as it always inculcates by its words the virtue of love either of the Lord or of one's brother. Let no one suppose that he has understood the Scripture rightly, in which he was unable to find the teaching of charity.[101]

Now *'measure'* [*satum*] *is a kind of measure* among the Palestinians, *containing a peck and a half*.[102] And the fact that Sarah makes loaves of bread baked in ashes is very much to the point. While the loaves are, as it were, baking in ashes, when they are in fact baking with fire, they lie concealed out of sight, and only the ashes which are heaped on from above are visible to the eyes of those who are watching attentively. But when they have been baked, the ashes are removed, and the fresh loaves are brought into the presence of diners, because truly *the words of the Lord are tried by fire*,[103] which is to say, the words of the Holy Spirit by whom the Scripture itself was composed. Yet on occasion by the meanness and simplicity of its style it may keep its knowledge within itself to such a degree that it does not easily reveal what spiritual fervour and how much heavenly nourishment it contains. But as long as the sweetness of the spiritual sense is disclosed to the hearts of the listeners after the veil of the letter has been withdrawn by the ministery of the preacher, the most wholesome loaves of bread, with, so to speak, the ashes knocked off, will be offered for the refreshment of the faithful.

And the *calf very tender and very good* which Abraham *took* from *the herd* signifies that same *mediator of God and men*,[104] whom the most merciful Father, according to the parable of the Gospel,[105] sacrificed in

100 Matt. 13:33.
101 Cf. Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* 1.36.40-41.
102 Isidore, *Etym.* 16.26.11.
103 Ps. 17:31 (18:30).
104 1 Tim. 2:5.
105 Cf. Luke 15:11-32.

honour of the return to him of his younger son, that is, the people of the Gentiles. For he is the calf, very tender and very good, taken from the herd to be killed and cooked especially for the citizens of heaven, because he alone was specially chosen from the whole human race, in order that the world might be redeemed by his blood, and so that through him might be re-established *in him* not only the things *that are on earth*, but also the things *that are in heaven*, as the Apostle says.[106] Clearly, this calf is rightly said to be very tender and very good, because what is so tender and so very good as he who humbled himself in order that we might stand up, *becoming obedient* to the Father *unto death, even to the death of the cross*.[107]

[18:8a] He took also butter and milk, and the calf which he had cooked, and set before them. By 'milk' is meant the first elementary principles, so to speak, of the Law of Moses, by 'butter' is meant the perfection of the teaching **/215/** of the Gospel; by 'milk', the simplicity of the literal sense in the Scriptures, by 'butter', the value of the mystical sense that is usually generated from the literal. Or indeed, 'milk' implies the beginning of faith, and 'butter', the perfection of the work that is created out of faith. Abraham set all these things before the men whom he had received to signify that *the children of promise*[108] will always offer spiritual feasts to the Lord – namely, the loaves of readings from the Holy Scriptures, the calf of the Lord's incarnation, the milk of faith or of perfection in this life, and the butter of good thoughts and deeds. Hence it is rightly added,

[18:8b] But he stood by them under the tree, because we must certainly feed, that is, delight the Lord with feasts of faith and moral virtues by living well, so that we will always remember to place ourselves in his sight, in accordance with the words of the blessed Elijah, *As the Lord lives, in whose sight I stand*;[109] and as the Psalmist says, *I will sing praise to you in the sight of the angels*;[110] and saying with the Apostle under this tree of the Lord's passion, *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*.[111]

[18:9-10c] And when they had eaten they said to him, Where is Sarah your wife? He answered, Lo, she is in the tent. And he said to him, I will return to you at this time, life accompanying, and Sarah your wife

106 Eph. 1:10.
107 Philipp. 2:8.
108 Gal. 4:28.
109 1 Kings/3 Kings 17:1 (also 2 Kings/4 Kings 3:14).
110 Ps. 137:1 (138:1).
111 Gal. 6:14.

shall have a son. Both of the Lord's households, that is to say, Abraham and Sarah, prepare the refreshment with the utmost haste, but just as in a well-ordered household Abraham approaches more boldly to the Lord with the feast prepared, while Sarah with a woman's fear and modesty remains in the tent, or rather behind the door of the tent, and does not yet dare approach, but overhears from her concealment the things that her husband talks about with the Lord. And therefore since she was both devoted to God and properly set under her husband, she heard the joyful news of her child-bearing which she greatly desired, and not indeed of any child-bearing, but of the birth of the one in whom both herself and all nations would receive blessing in the future. And it is fitting that after they eat, the angels promise that a son will be born to their hosts, because after the Lord receives the feast of our good deeds and faith, he rewards us with the grace of his blessing. And the angels ate, or rather they seemed to have eaten, as St Raphael explained **/216/** to Tobias,[112] so that they might prefigure the sacrament of the Lord's incarnation, in accordance with which *the Angel of great counsel*[113] himself was to eat as if he were a man, not only by appearing visibly, but also by sitting and eating at the table. But they, as the same Raphael says, enjoyed *invisible food*, that is, food *that cannot be seen by men* living in the flesh,[114] namely the joy of contemplation. The Lord says of this in the Gospel *that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven*.[115] For indeed *they always see*, that is, even when they come to us from without in some way or other to minister to us. And it is probable that the food which they ate was consumed as soon as it reached their spiritual or heavenly body, like water thrown onto a burning flame, and did not, like water poured upon the thirsty ground, help to refresh their body, as usually happens in us when we eat.

[18:11] Now they were both old and far advanced in years, and it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. For the sake of rhetorically amplifying[116] divine power, Scripture says that *both* were *elderly*, and besides that since Sarah was *sterile even her menstruation had ceased, so that she could no longer give birth, even if she had not been sterile. Then too, even if the woman is of advanced age, as long as she has the usual menstrual*

112 Cf. Tobit 12:19.

113 Isa. 9.6 (*Iuxta LXX*): Bede's reference is to Christ.

114 Tobit 12:19.

115 Matt. 18:10.

116 Bede uses the rare technical term *auxesis*, 'increase, amplification'. It is defined by Victorinus, *Explanationes*, ed. Halm, *Rhetores*, p. 169.23-33.

flows of women, she can give birth by a young man, but not by an older one, although that older man could still beget a child, but only by a young woman, as Abraham was able to do by Keturah after Sarah's death, because he found her at a life-bearing age. It is certainly this, therefore, that the Apostle commends, when he says, *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might be made the father of many nations, according to that which was said to him, So shall your seed be. And he was not weak in faith; neither did he consider his own body, already dead, whereas he was almost an hundred years old, nor the dead womb of Sarah. In the promise also of God he did not hesitate*.[117] So *for this reason the Apostle says that Abraham's body was 'already dead', because at that age he could not beget a child from any and every woman to whom some final period of child-bearing still remained. For we must understand that his body was 'dead' to something, but not* **/217/** *to everything. For a body that is dead to everything is no longer the old body of a living man but the corpse of a dead man*.[118]

[18:12] And she laughed secretly, saying, After I am grown old and my lord is an old man, shall I give myself to pleasure? The apostle Peter recalls this passage, when, admonishing wives to submit to their husbands, he adds, *As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord*.[119] And a clear parallel to this passage is what is written above about Abraham, that when he heard that Sarah would give birth, *he fell upon his face and laughed, saying in his heart, Shall a son, think you, be born to him that is a hundred years old, and shall Sarah that is ninety years old bring forth?* And he went on, saying to God, *O that Ishmael may live before you*.[120] But since the Apostle says that Abraham *did not hesitate from disbelief*,[121] the following passage makes it clear that Sarah did indeed hesitate, when the Lord says to Abraham,

[18:13b] Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I who am an old woman bear a child indeed? It remains to be understood that after they heard that Sarah was going to give birth to a son they both laughed, first Abraham marvelling in joy, and then Sarah herself joyfully doubting. Nevertheless, her doubt was immediately swept away, when the angel, offering the explanation of divine power, said to him,

[18:14] Is there anything hard to God? According to appointment I will return to you at this same time, life accompanying, and Sarah shall have

117 Rom. 4:18-20. Augustine does not quote this passage.
118 Augustine, *DCD* 16.28 (CCSL 48, 533).
119 1 Peter 3:6.
120 Gen. 17:17-18.
121 Rom. 4:20.

a son. After hearing this statement, all her doubt was removed and she was confirmed in her faith to such an extent that the Apostle deservedly says of her, *Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to deliver a child*.[122] And the fact that he says, *I will return to you*, and adds, *life accompanying*, is spoken indeed in the human fashion, as if he had said, *if there shall have been life accompanying*. But according to a deeper understanding, the angels, life accompanying, always either live in heaven or descend to earth assuredly with that life which says, *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son also to have life in himself*.[123] Clearly, both angels and saints are made blessed forever by the sight and splendour of this life. It seems that this passage must really be compared in the opposite sense with the deeds of the first created man. For after the sin of the transgression, Adam is said not to have seen **/218/** the Lord God, but to have heard his voice, walking in paradise.[124] Abraham, burning with faith, hope, and love of the blessing to come, saw the Lord standing, because of course the contemplation of the divine brightness was going to remain with him, although it had departed from Adam. The latter, after hearing the voice of the Lord God, hid himself trembling, because he blushed indeed that he had gone astray. The former, when he saw the Lord, whom he deservedly believed he had pleased by his obedience, at once joyfully ran towards him. Adam's action took place *in the breeze after noon*,[125] since he had driven the light of divine shelter and love from himself by sin. Abraham's took place *in the very heat of the day*,[126] because he was burning with the fire of divine love. Abraham received and refreshed the Lord as a guest, in order to make known by the carnal feast which he served that he would refresh him in his heart with a spiritual feast by living piously. This is in accord with what the Lord himself promised about those who love him, *Behold I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice and open to me, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me*.[127] The other, that is, the first created man, who ate the forbidden fruit and lost the eternal delights which he could have had in the presence of the Lord and his angels, was even visibly excluded from the tree of life, so that it might plainly be shown that he lost the imperishable fruit of

122 Hebr. 11:11. Bede quotes from the Old-Latin text as given by Augustine in *DCD* 16.28.

123 John 5:26.

124 Cf. Gen. 3:8.

125 Gen. 3:8.

126 Gen. 18:1.

127 Rev. 3:20.

wisdom, which he was accustomed to enjoy invisibly. And since the blessed Abraham deservedly because of his pious devotion had already for some time tasted the fruit of wisdom and life, which is Christ, he is rightly said to have seen and received the Lord, while he was standing *under the tree*.[128] It was there that Eve, having put aside her fear of God and disregarded the counsel of her husband, rashly approached the serpent in which the devil was speaking, and having been enticed by it into eating the forbidden fruit, she made her husband also an accomplice of her transgression. And because of this, after receiving the decree of justified damnation with her husband, she heard among other things, *In sorrow shall you bring forth children*;[129] and she gave birth to her first child Cain, the son of the curse and a fratricide. Here, subdued by the fear of God and at the same time conforming to the religious faith and charity of her husband, Sarah herself awaited at home, when the Lord appeared, until her husband arrived and she learned what they were to do. But even after preparing the feast for the reception of the Lord, she nevertheless kept herself modestly at home, and rejoiced that her husband went ahead with it to the Lord and offered him the gifts at once of her own and of his devotion. Therefore, they both received the reward of his favour in the child they were promised; and not any child, but expressly that **/219/** in whom all nations were blessed.[130] And rightly, for there the sin of the transgression in the first Adam was punished with deserved retribution; here the future time of redemption by the second Adam was foretold and prepared. And there follows:

[18:16] And when the men rose up from thence, they turned their eyes towards Sodom. And Abraham walked with them, bringing them on their way. When the men are said to have risen up from thence, it is revealed that Abraham, who was standing, served them as they were seated, although when he first saw them, they were standing. And they turned their eyes towards Sodom, so that, just as they rewarded the faith of the blessed Abraham with joyful promises, they also destroyed the faithlessness of the wicked city with avenging flames. This is in accord with the words of the Psalmist, who, after first stating the Lord's compassion toward the saints, *The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears unto their prayers*,[131] immediately turned to his severity in the punishment of the wicked, adding, *But the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things, to cut off*

128 Gen. 18:8.
129 Gen. 3:16.
130 Cf. Gen. 22:18; 26:4; Gal. 3:8.
131 Ps. 33:16 (34:15).

the remembrance of them from the earth.[132] And as to the fact that Abraham *walked* with the angels, *bringing them on their way*, he must be supposed to have done it out of his customary devoted hospitality; but how fortunate those steps, by which a man merited to walk with angels on earth and to bring them on their way back to heaven after they had come to visit him! And how fortunate now the life of those who conform to the angelic way of life on earth, that is to say, by living frugally and justly and piously and chastely, and as much as is possible for a mortal by always having time for divine worship.[133] Truly, because he received the Lord when he came so joyously that he even took care to bring the angels away on their departure as though the Lord were a member of his family, the blessed Abraham deserved to know the profounder mysteries of the divine plan. And just as he who, understanding the severity of the divine punishment that was about to come upon the world, had previously shown himself to be devoted to God in undertaking to offer hospitality, so he afterwards demonstrated that he was anxious for his neighbours by his entreaties on their behalf.

[18:20] And the Lord said, The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is multiplied, and their sin is become exceedingly grievous. He calls the fame or rather the infamy of its crimes, '*the cry of Sodom*'. In order to restrain us from this, the Apostle says, *Let all bitterness and anger and indignation and clamour and* **/220/** *blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice*.[134] The contrary of this cry, certainly, is the cry of the elect, about which, confidently entreating their Creator, they say, speaking as individuals, *Hear, O Lord, my prayer and let my cry come to you*.[135] Indeed, their great cry is sublime merit and the striving of faith seeking heavenly things alone, *where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God*.[136] Since they do not desire earthly wealth, nor vain and fleeting glory, nor the perishable joys of the flesh, but only the good things of heaven, everything that they do is lofty indeed and filled, as it were, with the sound of a cry. But, since the cry of the sinners was multiplied – that is, by the enormity of their crime – let us see what follows. The Lord says,

[18:21] I will go down and see whether they have done according to the cry that is come to me, or whether it be not so, that I may know. Now the fact that the Lord said that he went down to see whether or not

132 Ps. 33:17 (34:16).
133 Another allusion to the superiority of the monastic way of life.
134 Eph. 4:31.
135 Ps. 101:2 (102:1).
136 Col. 3:1.

that cry was true, does not show his ignorance, who has knowledge of all things, but instructs our rashness, lest we presume to reprove our neighbours' deeds before we are perfectly acquainted with them. This is the very thing that he teaches us in the building of the tower, where it is written that *the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of Adam were building*.[137] For what did he not see from heaven to earth – he, of whom it is written that *hell is naked before him, and there is no covering for destruction*?[138]

[18:22-24a] And they turned themselves from thence and went their way to Sodom. But Abraham as yet stood before the Lord, and drawing nigh he said, Will you destroy the just with the wicked? If there be fifty just men in the city, shall they perish withal? and so forth up to the point where he says,

[18:32b/c] What if ten should be found there? And the Lord **said, I will not destroy it for the sake of ten**. We read in what follows that two angels came to Sodom and were received by Lot. Hence, it seems probable that in this passage two angels departed from Abraham, and that the latter was speaking with the one who had remained with him when he interceded on behalf of the doomed city. In this intercession, the humility of the blessed Abraham should be particularly examined. Although he was in so intimate a relationship with God that he received him with hospitality as though he were a member of his family, and interceded with him for others as if with a bosom friend, **/221/** nonetheless he remained in his estimation of himself worthless and contemptible. Hence, in his next speech he says to him,

[18:27b] Seeing I have once begun, I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes. With these words he plainly refutes our pride, we, who standing a long way from the height of his merits, and being far removed from divine conversation on account of our dullness and sloth, are nevertheless puffed up by the swelling of pride, and reflect too little upon the fact that we are going to be ashes and dust. For the higher the blessed Abraham approached to the purity of the divine vision, the more certainly he scattered the despicable weaknesses of his own frailty. But we, who are shut off from the contemplation of divine glory within by the cloud of our depravity, bewail the darkness of the misery implanted in us by so much the less, as we are accustomed to gaze at nothing else.

[19:1a/b] And the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot

137 Gen. 11:5.
138 Job 26:6.

was sitting in the gate of the city. With good reason the angels who came to Abraham at midday are said to come in the evening to Sodom, because of course they came to announce favourable and joyful news to the former, but to bring bad news to the latter. Abraham burned with zeal for heaven with the benefit of light; Sodom hastened to eternal damnation beset by the darkness of its vices.

[19:1c-2b] And seeing them, he rose up and went to meet them, and worshipped prostrate to the ground and said, I beseech you, Lord, turn in to the house of your servant and lodge there, and so forth. The blessed Lot offers a great and perfect example of hospitality devoted to God. Running to meet the strangers entering the city, he not only was ready to receive them as guests, but also most urgently entreated that they turn aside to his house and rest with him. Although they declined at first to enter his house, nevertheless at his urging they afterwards consented to do, so that in this way they approved the diligence of his hospitality more precisely, and rewarded more worthily what they approved, in rescuing him with his household from the destruction of the sinners.

[19:4-5] But before they went to bed, the men of the city beset the house both young and old, all the people together. And they called Lot and said to him, Where are the men that came in to you at night? Bring them out hither that we may know them, and so forth. This is **/222/** what the prophet Isaiah says of the people of Israel who were sinning beyond measure, *They have proclaimed abroad their sin as Sodom, and they have not hid it*.[139] Indeed, they proclaimed abroad their sin as Sodomites, and did not hide it, when all males from childhood to old age used to engage shamelessly in indecent practices with males, so much so that they did not try to hide their crimes even from strangers and foreigners, but rather by using force they strove to make them like themselves in their wicked deeds and to involve them in their crimes. And indeed, to those men who were raging to carry out such an outrageous crime, Lot says, among other things,

[19:8a/c] I have two daughters who as yet have not known man. I will bring them out to you, and abuse them as it shall please you, so that you do no evil to these men. *Since Lot was willing to prostitute his daughters with this compensation, that the men who were his guests would suffer no such abuse from the Sodomites, it is a legitimate question whether compensation ought to be permitted for shameful crimes or for each and every one of the sinners, so that we may do some evil in order that someone else not do*

139 Isa. 3:9.

a more serious evil, or whether the fact that he said this should be attributed rather to Lot's confusion than to his judgement. Certainly, this compensation is permitted at very great risk of error. Moreover, if it is attributed to human confusion and to a mind agitated by so great an evil, in no way is it to be imitated.[140]

[19:10-11] And behold the men put out their hand and drew in Lot to them, and shut the door. And those that were without they struck with blindness from the least to the greatest, so that they could not find the door, and so forth up to what Lot said to his sons-in-law,

[19:14c/e] Arise, get out of this place, because the Lord will destroy this city. And he seemed to them to speak as it were in jest. The fact that the angels shut Lot's door, so that the Sodomites could seize neither him nor anyone from his house to destroy them, clearly indicates that the impiety and persecution of the wicked will destroy none of God's elect, just as the Lord says of his sheep, *And I give them life everlasting, and they shall not perish forever, and no man shall seize them out of my hand*.[141] Likewise, the fact that Lot, **/223/** when he was given the opportunity by the angels, was able to recall to salvation none of the faithless citizens, not even his own relatives and friends, although he tried hard, signifies that no man's effort can add to the number of those predestined for salvation, who were chosen by the Lord before the creation of the world, not even one soul, *for 'the Lord knows who are his'*.[142] But although it is unknown to the frailty of our human nature who belongs to the category of the elect, nevertheless we must not cease from an active care for our own salvation, and our tongue must not be restrained from teaching our neighbours, but following the example of the blessed Lot, we should not only live chastely, but we should also devote the office of piety to the correction of those who wander from the true path. For it is the case that although we cannot save those who are predestined to damnation, nevertheless we do not lose the reward for our kindness, which we devote to their salvation.

[19:17] And they brought him forth and set him without the city. And there he spoke to him, saying, Save your life. Do not look back, and do not stay in all the country about, but save yourself in the mountain lest you be also consumed. In a general sense, certainly, the fire and destruction of Sodom, from which Lot escaped, signifies the punishment of the Last

140 Augustine, *Quaestiones* 1.42 (CCSL 33, 17).

141 John 10:28.

142 2 Tim. 2:19: quoted from Augustine, *DCD* 20.7 (CCSL 48, 711); also 18.51 (CCSL 48, 650).

Judgement, when, after the total number of the elect has been filled up at the end of the world, all the wicked will be snatched away into the eternal fire, as the Lord explains when he says, *Likewise as it came to pass in the days of Lot, they did eat and drink, they bought and sold, they planted and built. And in the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and sulphur from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed*.[143] The apostle Jude also bears witness to this, when he says, *As Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbouring cities in like manner having given themselves to fornication and going after other flesh were made an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire*.[144] And the same fire of Sodom is appropriate for the purpose of making known the flames of the vices by which the wicked are burned in this life and are prepared for the eternal fire. Since they do not now **/224/** cease to burn with earthly lusts and the enticements of the flesh, they will never then cease to burn in the fire of divine punishment. The Lord also confirms this sense, indeed he even teaches it, when he says, *In that hour, he that shall be on the housetop and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away. And he that shall be in the field, in like manner, let him not return back. Remember Lot's wife*.[145] Now we are not being taught, lest we forsake the summit of the correct way of life and turn aside our soul to the abyss of worldly lust at the very moment of Last Judgement; or lest we abandon the plough of spiritual agriculture and look back, when no further correction of our deeds remains to us, but the account to be rendered of the things which we have done is at hand. Rather, since Judgement is near, this exhortation is given to the faithful, so that they may carry on with those good and wholesome deeds that they have undertaken, lest, by seeking again the contagion of the vices which they abandoned, they imitate Lot's wife, who was turned into a statue of salt when she incautiously looked back at Sodom burning with sulphur. Therefore, when the Lord restrains us from imitating Lot's wife, he really shows that the burning of the city, toward which she had cast back her eyes, expresses the flames of the vices, which we can and must avoid. Hence in our time we must not only understand spiritually the exhortation of the angels, whereby they warned Lot, when he was led out from Sodom, not to look back, and not to stay in all the country about, but to seek the mountain in order to save himself. We must also follow it with the utmost exertion, lest, that is, we incautiously seek again the burning enticements

143 Luke 17:28-30.
144 Jude 7.
145 Luke 17:31-32.

of the vices which for a little while we seem to have escaped; and so that, as far as possible, we do not consent to remain in the vicinity of sinners, lest by their example we wander away from the path of our righteousness, in accordance with the words of the Psalmist about the blessed man, *And he has not stood in the path of sinners*;[146] but so that we take care to ascend more quickly to the height of a lofty way of life.

[19:18-20a] And Lot said to them, I beseech you, my Lord, because your servant has found grace before you, and you have magnified your mercy, which you have shown to me, in saving my life, and I cannot escape to the mountain lest some evil seize me. There is a city here at hand to which I may flee. It is a little one, and I shall be /225/ saved in it. The blessed Lot did not seek the protection of a neighbouring city, as if he feared that the evil of some blow would come upon him if he should succeed in reaching the mountain. Instead, he wished to turn aside from that goal to a city located near at hand, lest the fire close at hand that was threatening the wicked destroy him where he was on the journey itself, while he was seeking the summit of the mountain that was so far away.

[19:21] And he said to him, Behold also in this, I have heard your prayers, not to destroy the city for which you have spoken, and so forth. O how great the bowels of divine compassion! Not only does he deliver the just man from the damnation of the wicked, but also he grants life which they have not deserved to many of them for the sake of the salvation of that just man, so that he might, at one and the same time, show in those who perished what impiety deserved, and in those who remained how much the intercession of the pious availed with God.

[19:22b] Therefore the name of that city was called Zoar. Zoar means '*small*',[147] and it was so-called because Lot had said, *Is it not a little one?*[148] But formerly it was called Bela, as we read above, *And against the king of Bela, which is Zoar*.[149] And Bela means '*a devouring*', which the Hebrews say is so-called *because it was swallowed up by the third earthquake*.[150] And just as Sodom in flames makes known allegorically the flames of the vices, and the mountain which Lot is ordered to climb, the summit of the virtues, so Zoar signifies a certain less perfect mode of the good way of life, which, although it is still a long way from the height of those leading a perfect life,

146 Ps. 1:1.
147 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 72 ['Segor']).
148 Gen. 19:20.
149 Gen. 14:2.
150 Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 14.2-3 (CCSL 72, 17).

is at any rate separated from the contagion of the wicked. For example, he who correctly observes the married way of life, has indeed escaped from the sulphurous flame of fornication, and yet has not ascended the mountain of sexual abstinence; he who averts his hand and heart from plundering and avarice, and is accustomed to give from his possessions to the poor, and nevertheless has not yet been able to give up everything, has certainly escaped from the burning of Sodom, and has entered the walls of the small city where he might escape from the danger of destruction, but he has not yet ascended to the citadel of virtue where the man who was already perfect would stand out; and other examples of this kind.

[19:23-25a] The sun was risen upon the earth, and Lot entered Zoar. And the Lord rained upon Sodom and /226/ Gomorrah sulphur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he destroyed these cities and all the country around. The rising of the sun upon the earth, at the same time Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, signifies the coming of Last Judgement, when destruction will suddenly overwhelm the wicked after all the just have been saved. It indeed happened rightly by the judgement of God that those who tried to ensnare in their shameful crimes the blessed Lot, as he was labouring hard in the dark of the night to resist, at the sudden advent of day, seeing that he was saved, straightway perished themselves. And those who themselves had burned in the dark with the filthy pleasures of the flesh, at the sudden appearance of morning were consumed in sulphur and fire, because all those who are secretly a slave to vices in the blindness of their understanding are openly punished in the examination of their wickedness by the strict Judge.

Likewise it should be noted that in one and the same night Lot took delight in having the Lord as his guest and was protected from his enemies, and the Sodomites laboured to heap up their crimes, even disgracing Lot himself with his guests. But at sunrise he was freed for the sake of his righteousness, while they were damned on account of their wickedness, because truly in the night of this age[151] the saints also in the depths of their hearts rejoice to receive the one who said, *Behold I will come, and I will dwell in the midst of you*,[152] and in the Apocalypse, *Behold, I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me*.[153] And the wicked seek with their temptations to corrupt not only the deeds of the faithful but

151 The sixth or present age.

152 Zech. 2:10.

153 Rev. 3:20.

their very faith. But at the dawn of the morning of the age to come,[154] the faithful receive the crown of life, and the wicked incur the punishment of eternal death. And the Sodomites perish from the punishment they deserve for their sins; for since they led their life in the putrefaction of lust and the heat of desire, they are deservedly punished by the flames of the fires and the stench of sulphur. Nor can it be doubted that they are not only damned at present by such punishment, but that they are also to be damned forever, as the Apostle John says, *But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, they shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and sulphur*.[155] Therefore the temporal punishment and divine vengeance for the different kinds of sins is the same, in accordance with what the Wise Man says when he is interpreting the plagues of the Egyptians, *That they might know that by what things a man sins, by the same also he is tormented*,[156] just as **/227/** in contrast the blessed Lot, from the way of life which he led, deserved to be spared. For since he proved to be hospitable, the result was that he was saved from destruction after he took in the good strangers. And there is no doubt but that after his death he was received by the same strangers into the eternal tents, so that he, who brought the citizens of heaven into his guest-chamber and refreshed them with his feast, was himself brought by them into the heavenly dwelling-place, where he would be refreshed forever with the bread of the angels, that is, with the striking glory of the divine light.

From the fact that it says, *the Lord rained sulphur and fire from the Lord out of heaven*, the person of the Father and the Son is clearly distinguished, and the heresy of Sabellius, which says that the Father is the same as the Son, is repudiated.[157] For the Lord rained from the Lord, the Son from the Father; and hence elsewhere it is said to the Father, *You have made all things in Wisdom*,[158] that is, in the Son. Similar to this are those words of the Psalmist, when he describes the two persons of the Father and the Son in such a way that he nevertheless reveals one divine nature in the two persons, *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The sceptre of your kingdom is a sceptre of fairness. You have loved justice, and hated iniquity. Therefore*

154 That is, the eighth age of the world.

155 Rev. 21:8. The point of this verse with respect to what Bede has just said is underscored by its final clause, 'which is the second death', which Bede does not bother to quote.

156 Wisdom 11:17.

157 On the Sabellian heresy, see Augustine, *DCD* 10.24; 11.10; on Bede's attitude towards heresies, see Plummer, *BOH* 1, lxii–lxiii.

158 Ps. 103:24 (104:24).

God, your God, has anointed you.[159] For '*your throne, O God*' is said to God the Son. '*God, your God, has anointed you*' is added about God the Father.

[19:26] And his wife, looking behind her, was turned into a statue of salt. That this really happened on the literal level must be believed. Indeed, Josephus reports that this same statue of salt lasted up to his own times at the gates of the same city.[160] And certainly Lot's wife looked back, out of the fear of feminine frailty of the sudden outcry of those who were perishing and the crackling of the flames coming down from heaven. But nevertheless she exhibits in this weakness the allegorical figure of those who, having renounced the world once and for all and undertaken the arduous path of the virtues, suddenly return with an unstable and as it were womanly heart to those worldly desires that they had given up. Of these the apostle Peter says, *It had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them*.[161] Just as, on the contrary, Lot, who gave up everything **/228/** that he possessed to be destroyed along with the sinners, signifies those who truly renounce the world, and not those who repent of having renounced it. They are likewise clearly signified by the blessed Noah, who also gave up everything of his own to be destroyed along with the wicked, in his case, by water, just as in Lot's case, by fire. And the fact that Lot's wife was slain and turned into a statue of salt when she turned aside from the way that the Lord pointed out, plainly signifies that those who deviate from the path of truth by returning to their vices do indeed perish in their own depravity. But by the example of their own perdition they leave to others a seasoning, as it were, of wisdom, so that the latter, calling to mind their destruction, may defend themselves more securely and prudently in the struggle for justice which they have undertaken.[162] Finally, the Lord, in the course of warning the faithful not to forsake the path of faith which they have set out on, administers, as it were, the rock of salt to them so that they may taste his words more sweetly, when he says among other things, *Remember Lot's wife*.[163] Therefore, anyone who longs to escape the fire of vices, anyone who longs to escape the Last Judgement, must always, forgetting the past, aim at the joys of the divine promise in those things that are in front of him.

159 Ps. 44:7-8 (45:6-7).
160 Cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 1.11.4.
161 2 Peter 2:21.
162 Cf. Augustine, *DCD* 16.30 (CCSL 48, 535).
163 Luke 17:32.

[19:30a/c] And Lot went up out of Zoar and abode in the mountain, and his two daughters with him (for he was afraid to stay in Zoar). He hastened to go up out of Zoar to the mountain, because he knew that this was more pleasing to the angels by whom he had been saved, and he feared that the same city, which also escaped the danger of death at that moment of time by his intercession, nevertheless could be destroyed afterwards with its neighbouring cities in a similar ruin on account of the sins of its citizens. He was especially fearful, since he knew that it had been destroyed repeatedly by earthquake at an earlier period.[164] Hence it was also called Bela, that is, '*falling headlong*', *or* '*devouring*'.[165] But also, since, according to the spiritual sense, Sodom signifies the fires of the vices, Zoar, the still limited undertaking of good works, and the mountain, the height of the virtues, it is necessary, when one approaches the beginning of virtue from the fire of the vices, that he not tarry in this beginning, but that he always strive with a quick step to aim at and hasten toward the higher profit of good action. **/229/**

[19:31-32] And the elder said to the younger, Our father is old, and there is no man left on the earth to come in unto us after the manner of the whole earth. Come, let us make him drunk with wine, and let us sleep with him, that we may preserve seed of our father for ourselves, and so forth. In these verses it is related how Lot's daughters, after making him drunk with wine, slept with him, and conceived, and gave birth to Moab and Ammon,[166] the patriarchs of the Moabites and the Ammonites. And indeed the deed narrated here seems to have happened contrary to the natural law of human conception, but the fact cannot be doubted, because so great an authority declares that it did happen. Lot can seem to be excusable, because he unknowingly endured, rather than committed, so great a crime of incest. But he is not exempt from blame, in that, having forgotten the still recent destruction of the wicked, he indulged so far in wine that he was unable to know what was done to him. His daughters also seem to be excusable because they did not commit incest with their father out of lust, but because they thought that no man remained on earth, but rather that they had all been destroyed in the same flaming punishment. And they supposed that, just as after the flood the human race was restored by the three sons of Noah and a like number of daughters-in-law, so now it was to be renewed a second

164 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 19.30 (CCSL 72, 23); *In Gen.* 4.1122-27 (above, p. 303).

165 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 62).

166 The KJV form of *Ammon* is *Ben-Ammi* (= 'son of Ammon'). I retain the Vulgate form, because Bede's subsequent discussion depends on it.

time by themselves and their father, who alone had survived the fires. And therefore they believed that this ought rather to be done in sleep, lest their father, knowing of it, despise and reject such a marriage in disgust. They can seem to be excusable, therefore, because they believed that they were displaying obedience to the divine order in a deed of this kind. But they are not exempt from blame, in that they did not seek either the will or the counsel of their father in such a difficulty nor did they delay for a time, until they might know more certainly what had happened to the human race throughout the world.

On the moral level of the allegory we can understand from this deed that no rank, housed in a body that is still earthbound, however lofty it may seem to be, can be free from the contamination of a tempting fault. For, behold, the blessed Lot indeed escaped the stinking flames of Sodom, and likewise avoided the ruin of the sinful city of Zoar, and climbed to the summit of the mountain. But just when you might think that he was placed in the highest citadel of the virtues, you see him there, drunk at night and of a sudden defiled by his own daughters, because it often happens **/230/** that those who had overcome some temptations of vices by the splendour of heavenly grace, weakly succumb to others in turn through the indolence of their own frailty. Certainly, angelic guidance reveals the divine help by which we are delivered from the dangers of sins. But the daughters of the blessed Lot represent the carnal thoughts of even the noblest men, the disregard of which is sometimes snatched from them, so that even from a pious heart a wicked word and a wicked deed, bad sons as it were, are conceived. For it cannot be doubted that Lot's sons, born from his daughters, who begot pagan peoples and peoples estranged from the faith of their father, signify those deeds of the saints that pertain not to the rule of religious observance, but rather to the depravity of the wicked. Such was the adultery of David;[167] such the pride of king Hezekiah;[168] such the unwary advance of king Josiah to the fight in which he was killed and eventually abandoned the kingdom of David to its enemies;[169] and such thereafter the denial of the very blessed Prince of the apostles.[170] And likewise the times are often suited to the circumstances, for Lot, who had been rescued from Sodom at dawn's early light, with night coming on got drunk and was deceived. This is because the fact that we are saved from dangers is certainly owing to God's illuminating grace, while the fact that

167 Cf. 2 Sam./2 Kings 11.
168 Cf. 2 Kings/4 Kings 20; Isa. 39.
169 Cf. 2 Kings/4 Kings 23:29.
170 Cf. Matt. 26:69-75, etc.

we fall back into our vices is owing to our own blindness and frailty.

The daughters of Lot give birth to Moab and Ammon, who signify sins, as is also proved by that injunction of the Law whereby it is said, *The Moabites and the Ammonites shall not enter into the church of the Lord up to the third and fourth generation, and forever*,[171] because, as I have said, the moral lapses and vices of the elect are by no means counted among the number of the virtues with which the Church is perfected and adorned, but rather they are concealed by the covering of good works so that they do not appear. Also the names of Lot's sons, the first of which, Moab, means 'from the father', and the second, Ammon, 'my people',[172] are very appropriate to the habit of vices. †<Moab is so named> because <sin> was not implanted in us by God the Creator, but I know full well that it was introduced as a consequence of our descent from the first marriage, not by divine providence. And <the latter> is named Ammon, that is, 'my people', because **/231/** I recognize that sin must be attributed to me and not be ascribed to the Creator of the universe.†[173] To be sure, it should be noted that strictly speaking the name means '*people of sorrow*'.[174] But Ammon is said to be 'my people', because the name itself does not actually differ from the meaning of 'sins'. For just as we ought to rejoice at the harvest of the virtues that are given to us by the Lord, so we must needs repent with wholesome sorrow for the emergence of vices, which are universally agreed to appear from the corruption of our nature.[175] And indeed Lot's son,[176] who was conceived out of incest, signifies these things. On the other hand, Isaac, who was born of the promise and is interpreted to mean '*joy*',[177] signifies the grace of the virtues.

171 Deut. 23:3 (not from the Vulgate text: cf. Ambrose, *Expositio Euangelii secundum Lucam* 4.53 [PL 15, 1628]).

172 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 19.36-38 (CCSL 72, 24).

173 The passage marked with daggers is corrupt. Very possibly, the corruption stems from the loss of a crucial phrase at an early stage of transmission. My provisional reconstruction is based in part on variant readings from the three surviving manuscripts of English provenance, A, Lp, and W. See Appendix 2: 4.1313-1315. The words in angled brackets are entirely conjectural.

174 Reading *meroris* (Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. [CCSL 72, 61], etc.) for *merosus*. I can find no warrant for *populus merosus* ('unmixed people') in any of Bede's sources, whereas *populus meroris* is commonplace. Given Bede's reference to 'wholesome sorrow' immediately below, the error is almost certainly scribal.

175 This is a buried reference to the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30), which, as Scott DeGregorio has kindly pointed out to me, colours the meaning of the entire paragraph. Virtues are sown by God; vices are oversown by the devil or the corruption of human nature.

176 I.e., Ammon.

177 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 67).

[20:1] Abraham removed from thence to the south country, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and went into exile in Gerar. The fact that Abraham comes to the south country reveals by his earthly journey the divine progress of his mind, whereby he always used to ascend to more perfect deeds of the virtues, just as all the other saints do as well. Certainly the south country, which is nearer to the light and heat of the sun, often signifies on the moral levels of allegory the life of the faithful, which, after the torpor of worldly desire had been dispelled, used to be renewed more and more every day by the inward light of divine love. And after Sodom was destroyed, Abraham seeks the south country, whenever any one of the elect, witnessing the destruction of the depraved, arms himself more piously in submission to his Creator, so that he, to whom it is granted for the present to survive the perdition of the wicked, may deserve to share in the joys of the good forever. For *when the wicked one is whipped, the little one will be wiser*.[178]

The following words of this passage, where it is said that Abraham dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and went into exile in Gerar, are likewise appropriately suited to the spiritual progress of the elect, for *Kadesh* means *'holy' or 'changed'*,[179] Shur means 'strong', and *Gerar means 'alien residence'*.[180] Therefore, *Abraham removed from thence to the south country, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur*, because, of course, all the elect are inwardly illuminated with the knowledge of the truth. They burn with love of the divine vision, and at the same time they also strive to practise the deeds of holiness. They take care to lead a changed life among men, that is, a heavenly life in place of an earthly, an angelic life in place of a human, and by the strength of their unconquerable faith they do not cease to adhere to the one who is uniquely strong, saying singly and **/232/** all together, *But it is good for me to adhere to my God*.[181] And certainly it should be observed that among the Hebrews Shur is one of the ten names of God, by which the virtue of the Omnipotent is usually signified.[182] Therefore, anyone who by his virtuous deeds strives daily for the vision of his Creator dwells between Kadesh and Shur; and since this vision is usually in the future age, and those who have learned to hope for the eternal fatherland in heaven profess themselves to be exiles in the present age, it rightly follows, *and he went into*

178 Proverbs 19:25: *astutior erit paruulus*, Bede; *stultus sapientior erit*, Vulgate. The proverb is quoted with many variations in the second clause.

179 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 63 ['Cades']).

180 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 66).

181 Ps. 72:28 (73:28).

182 On the ten names of God, cf. Jerome, *Ep*. 22 (PL 22, 428–30). Jerome glosses *El* as '*fortis*'.

exile in Gerar. For the life of the saints, which is alienated from temporal joys in proportion as it is surrendered to the divine commandments, is appropriately prefigured both by the word for exile and by the name Gerar, that is, 'alien residence'. Hence the Apostle, glorifying the life of the same patriarchs, said, *By faith* Abraham *abode in the land of promise, as if in a strange land, dwelling in cottages, with Isaac and Jacob, the co-heirs of the same promise. For he looked for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*.[183] And a little further on, *All these died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and saluting them, and confessing that they are exiles and strangers on the earth*.[184] For those who say these things signify that they are searching for the fatherland. *Moreover,* Gerar *was once the boundary of the Canaanites to* the south *and the capital city of Palestine,* placed *between Kadesh and Shur, that is, between two deserts, one of which is joined to Egypt, which the people reached across the straits of the Red Sea, while the other, Kadesh, stretches to the desert of the Saracens*.[185] This follows:

[20:2] And he said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister. So Abimelech the king of Gerar sent and took her. Why Abraham said this of Sarah, and hence the fact that we must believe that she was not sullied in any way by intercourse with the king, although she was carried off to the king's house, has already been spoken of above, where she was carried off by the Pharaoh in the same way, but was returned to her husband by God's command.[186] And then this follows:

[20:3-4] And God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and he said to him, Lo, you shall die for the woman you have taken, for she has a husband. Now Abimelech had not touched her, and he said, Lord, will you slay a nation /233/ that is ignorant and just? and the rest of this passage. It seems that Abimelech not only knew the cult of the true religion but also practised it diligently with all his people. For how might a man who was unacquainted with the knowledge and fear of God deserve to be rebuked by the direct address of God when he had sinned, or how might he receive God's words of rebuke with such great humility? For he also clearly showed the ignorance of his nation when he said, *Will you slay a nation that is ignorant and just?* And he showed the purity of his own heart and also of his deed, when he added,

183 Hebr. 11:9-10.
184 Hebr. 11:13.
185 Jerome, *De situ* (PL 23, 898).
186 *In Gen.* 3.1153-84 (above, pp. 251–52).

[20:5c] In the simplicity of my heart and cleanness of my hands have I done this. Hence, because he replied prudently and humbly to the Lord, he deserved to be both praised and consoled immediately by the Lord's next words, who says,

[20:6b/c] And I know that you did it with a sincere heart; therefore I kept you from sinning against me. But also the fact that, *rising up forthwith in the night, he called all his servants*, and told what had happened to him, and that they, on hearing the danger of the sin which the king had fallen into, *were all exceedingly afraid*,[187] is instructive to both of them, that is, to the king himself and to his servants, as to how greatly he was devoted to justice. For also when the king himself said to Abraham,

[20:9b/c] What have you done to us? What have we offended in, that you have brought upon me and upon my kingdom a great sin? it clearly reveals that the king did not commit a trifling sin of ignorance, because he acknowledged that it was injurious not only to himself, but also to his kingdom. Hence, just because he had merited God's forgiveness for his sin, or rather because he merited being kept from sinning by God's grace, he did not believe that it would be enough, if he did not also, for his own satisfaction, give to the man against whom he had unknowingly sinned a large amount of money along with the return of his wife, as we read in the following verses. And it should not be wondered at that uncircumcised men could have been worshippers of the truth at that time, since the blessed Job and the kings his friends are also believed to have served the Lord faithfully with all of their people without the sacrament of circumcision after the time when circumcision had been introduced. And furthermore it is well known that the patriarch Shem with Arpachshad, Shelah, and Eber, his sons and grandsons, had survived in the flesh up to that time, and had lived in a manner pleasing to God without the law of circumcision.[188] Hence, it seems probable that the seal in circumcision was given only to Abraham and his seed and **/234/** family, but that in other peoples there could still have been some, who served God devoutly according to their innate knowledge of the Law,[189] evidently purified from the stain of the first transgression either by

187 Gen. 20:8.

188 According to Bede's calculations in the Greater Chronicle (*DTR* 66), Isaac was circumcised in AM 2048, while Shem survived to AM 2158, Arpachshad to AM 1996, Shelah to AM 2126, and Eber to AM 2187.

189 Jones ('Bede's Commentary on Genesis', pp. 122–23) translates this phrase (*pro naturali scientia legis*), 'by an understanding of natural law', in the course of asserting that Bede, for whom 'Nature and Grace are twin extensions of God to man', made 'a case for all moral Abimelechs, though they were not patriarchs of the Chosen Seed'. MS B does indeed

offerings of sacrificial victims or at any rate by the profession alone of the true faith. This was so especially when there were those still surviving who retained a memory either of the wiping out of the human race in the flood, or the construction of the tower and the division of languages, or the destruction of Sodom. For when the narrative of Genesis is carefully considered it reveals that Shem himself survived in the flesh until the fiftieth year after the birth of Jacob.[190] The blessed Pope Gregory concurs with this opinion, when he says that we must certainly not believe that so slight a number of men in those times had attained to eternal life as the law-giver Moses seems to apprehend from the very few written memorials of his authors.[191]

As to the fact that Abraham, in the course of apologising to the king, who naturally keeps persistently asking why he had said that his wife was his sister, among other things says,

[20:12] However, otherwise she is truly my sister, the daughter of my father and not the daughter of my mother, the old translation more suitably has, *And indeed she is truly my sister from my father, but not from my mother*.[192] That is, she was the daughter of his brother, not of his sister; for sometimes in the Scriptures brothers or sisters, who are from one family, that is, *patria* [the Greek word for family], which speakers of Latin translate as *paternitates* ['descendants from one father'] are called by their family relationship, since from one root a great crowd of descendants is spread. Otherwise how is it that the just man Abraham took to wife the daughter of his own father, although Scripture does not speak by name of the thing itself in the first men for modesty's sake, preferring it to be understand rather than mentioned. And then the king said to Sarah,

[20:16b/e] Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. This shall serve you for a covering of your eyes to all that are with you, wherever you go. And remember you were taken. Inasmuch as she speaks in jest, since she said that he was her brother,[193] he not only says that she was

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read *naturalis* instead of *naturali*, but Jones does not adopt B's reading in his text. Bede's point is that Abimelech, though not of the line of Abraham and hence uncircumcised, nevertheless in some way acquired a knowledge of the true religion ('It seems that Abimelech not only knew the cult of the true religion but also practised it diligently with all his people' [*In Gen.* 4.1389-90 (above, p. 311)]), which might save him.

190 Cf. Bede, *DTR* 66, AM 1658 (the birth of Arpachshad). Bede puts the birth of Jacob in AM 2108; accordingly, Shem died in AM 2158 (500 years after the birth of Arpachshad and 50 years after the birth of Jacob).

191 The source for this statement in Gregory's works is unknown.

192 As in Augustine, *DCD* 16.30 (CCSL 48, 535).

193 Cf. Gen. 20:5.

taken because she concealed the truth in pretence by saying that the one who was her husband was her brother, but he also urges that she remember this afterwards, in order that she may not in the future, having been taken under the same pretence, incur the same reproach. Now if **/235/** in this text, where Sarah is seized as a beloved by the kings, with Abraham's acquiescence, but is returned under God's care undefiled to her husband, it gives one pleasure to perceive something allegorical, it is signified that the Church is to be assailed very often by the temptations of worldly powers, with the permission of course of the Lord, who deigns to be called her husband for the sake of his gift of divine protection and grace, so that, having been tested by adversaries, it may become more clearly evident how strong she is in faith, by what chastity she is devoted to God, and finally by how great a care of her Creator she is always to be kept from all the snares of her enemies and is never to be corrupted from the simplicity of her faith. And the fact that, when the king was about to return Sarah, he gave to Abraham at the same time sheep and oxen, servants and handmaids, and a large amount of money signifies the time when the kingdom of this world would submit the neck to the Christian faith, and would hold in veneration that religion, which it once strove to wipe out. And the fact that Sarah was twice desired and taken by kings, and yet was never defiled, once indeed as a young woman by Pharaoh, and now at a more advanced age by Abimelech, signified that the Church, although always to be troubled by hardships in this life, would nevertheless be tested by two persecutions greater than the rest – the one of the Roman Empire, which, having endured it as it were in her youth, she overcame with the aid of the most powerful and glorious Lord; the other of the Antichrist, which in her old age so to speak, that is, at the impending end of her temporal life, she will endure and overcome with the help of the same compassionate Lord. For the fact that Sarah was of such great beauty, that even in old age she could be loved on account of the grace of her figure, signifies that at the end of time the Church is to be adorned with an equally great glory of the virtues, of which her bitter enemy with his attendants is terribly jealous, and therefore struggles to destroy her with all the skills of his treacherous power. This will fulfil the prophecy according to which it is said of her children, *They shall still increase in a fruitful old age, and shall be well treated, that they may announce*,[194] that is, that they may proclaim the faith which they steadfastly glory in amid the evils which they endure. The fact that, under God's care, each king was saved from violating Sarah

194 Ps. 91:15-16 (92:14-15).

signifies that the fury of the persecutors will be so constrained, through the Lord's mercy, that none of those who truly adhere to the Church can be led astray from the purity of the faith and love that is in Christ. The fact that each was forced by blows to return Sarah to her husband, and that each rectified his rash seizure with a simultaneous payment of money, signified that the persecutors would very often be restrained from injuring the faithful by adversity and the loss of their temporal goods; **/236/** but that they would also be converted to respect and association with the same faithful. Not only do we know that this happened more than once in the persecutions, but we also believe that it will happen in that final persecution greater than the others – and this through the prayers of our spiritual leaders and the tenderness and pity of our Saviour the Lord, who deigned to join holy Church to himself in marriage. For the blessed Abraham, praying for Abimelech, appropriately signifies both our Saviour the Lord himself, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us, and the bishops and rulers of the Church, who, since they have a care for its purity, do not fail to beseech the Lord for her adversaries, not only that they may not defile her, but also that they may desist the more quickly from crimes already begun. Nor must it be thought contrary to the purpose that the persecutors of the good can be prefigured by Abimelech, the good and God-fearing man. For it is customary in the Scriptures not only for evil things to be signified by good men, but also at times for good things to be signified by wicked men.[195] For the blessed Pope Gregory did not hesitate to offer the really wicked kings Saul and Jeconiah as figures for our Lord the Saviour, and on the other hand he says that the faithlessness of the Jews was signified by the very faithful deed of Uriah.[196]

[21:1-2] And the Lord visited Sarah as he had promised her, and fulfilled what he had spoken to her. And she conceived and bore a son in her old age at the time that God had foretold her. God is said to visit Sarah, who was, as it were, already weary and without hope of any fruit of offspring, in order that he might bestow by the presence of divine grace what nature seemed to deny. This speech is aptly suited to all the children of promise, who are saved not by right of their own free status but by the election of grace, not by the effort of their own labour, but by the Lord visiting their heart and fulfilling the gift of grace which he promised.

195 See Introduction, p. 18, n. 91.

196 Cf. Gregory, *Hom.* 7.4 (Saul) (CCSL 141, 51); *Moralia* 28.8.19 (Jeconiah) (CCSL 143B, 1410); *Moralia* 3.28.55 (Uriah) (CCSL 143, 148–50). This is an example of interpretation *in bono et in malo*, for which, see Introduction, p. 18.

[21:3] And Abraham called the name of his son, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. Isaac means '*laughter*' or '*joy*',[197] because that name is suited to all the faithful, to whom their Redeemer promises among others the good things of the divine inheritance, when he says, *But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you*.[198]

[21:4-5a] And he circumcised him on the eighth day, as God had commanded him, when he was a hundred years old. Just as Isaac was in fact born in the time of the Old Covenant, but by his very **/237/** nativity signifies the heirs of the New Covenant, so also the circumcision by which he was consecrated is indeed a sacrament of the Old Covenant, but was sent as a prefiguration of the grace of the New Covenant, by which the world was to be cleansed in Christ of all the filth of sin and death and mortality. For at that time circumcision released the faithful from the bondage of original sin, and yet it was given as a type of the higher grace, whereby the whole kingdom of sin and death was to be destroyed by the Lord's passion and resurrection. In remembrance of this we also are absolved from all sins in baptism, and at the last day, restored from all corruption and mortality of flesh and spirit, we will come to eternal life, where, as the Lord says, the children of the resurrection '*shall neither marry, nor be married, but are as the angels in heaven*;[199] *neither can they die anymore*'.[200] And since the Lord rose from the dead on the eighth day, that is, after the sabbath, we hope that we will also be resurrected in the eighth age. For since there are six ages of this world, a seventh age of the sabbath rest of the souls in the other life, and this eighth age of our resurrection and the universal Judgement, circumcision was properly enjoined to be done on the eighth day. And the fact that Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born and circumcised as the son of promise, harmonizes most fittingly with the fulfilment of the same promise. For since the number one hundred is perfect, because it is especially constructed so that it is transferred from the left to the right hand,[201] and therefore is mystically suited to the good that is divine and eternal, Isaac is rightly born in this number, in order that, having been born miraculously of aged parents, he might by his birth signify the heirs not of the temporal and very worthless kingdom, but of the eternal kingdom in heaven. It is certainly in accord with this sacramental symbol that Noah's

197 Jerome, *Hebr. nom.*, Gen. (CCSL 72, 67).
198 John 16:22.
199 Mark 12:25.
200 Luke 20:36.
201 Cf. *In Gen.* 2.1069-74 (above, pp. 172–73), etc.

ark was also built in a hundred years;[202] and that Abraham remained in the Promised Land for a hundred years; and that Isaac, sowing in Gerar, *found that same year a hundredfold*;[203] and that the court of the tabernacle is a hundred cubits long;[204] and that in the parable of the seed in the Gospel the good ground yielded fruit a hundredfold;[205] and that the Lord promises to those leaving their own goods a hundredfold in this age and eternal life besides.[206] In all of which the number one hundred signifies either the joys of eternal life or those good deeds by which they are achieved.

[21:8] And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day of his weaning. Isaac is nourished by milk whenever anyone of the elect, that is to say, a son **/238/** of promise, recently born in Christ, receives the first rudiments of the faith. And although he is not yet able to investigate the deepest mysteries of the divine, nevertheless, attracted by the sweetness of heavenly rewards, he strives to pursue good deeds, by which, with the help and largesse of God, he may deserve to receive better things, in accordance with that word of the apostle Peter, *Wherefore laying away all malice and all guile and dissimulations and envies and all distractions, as newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow into salvation, if so be you taste that the Lord is sweet*.[207] But Isaac is weaned and goes on to the eating of bread when the elect not only learn by progressive increases of faith to acknowledge *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*,[208] but also to add that *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*.[209]

And Abraham made a great feast on the day of Isaac's weaning, because of course there is a great festival of the mind in the most distinguished teachers, when they have seen those whom they had educated climbing to the citadel of wisdom and virtue.

[21:9-10] And when Sarah had seen the son of Hagar the Egyptian playing, she said to Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son Isaac. Some manuscripts have, *the son of Hagar the Egyptian playing with Isaac*

202 Cf. *In Gen.* 2.1067-74 (above, pp. 172–73).
203 Gen. 26:12.
204 Exod. 27:18.
205 Luke 8:8.
206 Matt. 19:29.
207 1 Peter 2:1-3.
208 1 Cor. 2:2.
209 John 1:1.

her son, which is not found in the Hebrew text.[210] But whether he played with Isaac or in his presence, Sarah did not want the son of the bondwoman to be the master of play of her own son. She did not want the son, whom she had received in promise as an old woman, to be made unworthy of the promises and the divine blessing by his association with the base patterns of behaviour of the bastard. Hence the Apostle did not hesitate to call this play persecution.[211] For he is not alone the persecutor of his brother who pursues him with swords or hatred or insults; so too is the one who in a charming manner seeks to turn him aside from the rectitude of his purity by games or unsuitable talk. Hence too the Psalmist says, *The wicked have told me fables, but not so as your Law, Lord. All your statutes are truth. The wicked have persecuted me. Help me*.[212] And since he himself loved the Law of the Lord and the statutes of truth, he endured the tellers of fables as though they were persecutors; and for that reason he prayed for divine help to overcome them.[213] But the Apostle plainly shows what each son of Abraham stands for allegorically, when he writes **/239/** to the Galatians: *It is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondwoman, and the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things were said in an allegory. For these are the two covenants. The one from mount Sinai, engendering unto bondage, which is Hagar. For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia, which has affinity to that Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But that Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of all of us*.[214]

The fact that he says that the son of the handmaid was indeed born according to the flesh, but the son of the free woman was by promise, plainly teaches that sexual intercourse begot the one, signifying nature, while the promise gave the other, signifying grace. For Ishmael was born, like other men, by a mingling of each sex according to the usual law of nature. Therefore it was said to be 'according to the flesh'. Not that these things are not benefits of God, but where the gift of God was to be signified, since it was granted unowed to men by the grace of God, it was fitting for a son to be given this way, even though he was not owed by the courses of nature. Therefore Isaac was not born to Abraham according to the flesh, but by

210 Cf. Jerome, *Hebr. quaest*. 21.9 (CCSL 72, 24).
211 Cf. Gal. 4:29.
212 Ps. 118:85-86 (119:85-86).
213 Cf., e.g., 1 Tim. 1:4.
214 Gal. 4:22-26.

promise, not because he had not produced him by the flesh, but because he had received him from the height of despair. And unless God were at hand according to his promise, as a man already old, he dared hope for no offspring from the womb of his aged wife. And the Apostle, explaining the Law, adds, *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he, who was born according to the flesh, persecuted him who was after the spirit, so also it is now*.[215] He does not condemn the Old Covenant, as though it were contrary to the New, lest he support the mad doctrine of Manichaeus, God forbid, by his authority. Therefore he would not prefer the apostles and the evangelists in any way to Moses and the prophets, who established the Old Covenant, concerning whose shared grace of spirit, virtue, and faith he elsewhere says, *But having the same spirit of faith, as it is written, 'I believed, for which cause I have spoken'. We also believe, for which cause we speak also*.[216] But with good reason he censures those who interpret the Law, which is spiritual, according to the flesh, and who seek temporal benefits from the Lord **/240/** and a temporal kingdom from the observance of the Law, but not the eternal good in heaven, and he declares that they are to be driven from the house of the kingdom. He reproves those who trust that the letter of the Law is sufficient for their salvation without the aid of grace, which is characteristic of the Jews, concerning whom he likewise says, *For they, not knowing the justice of God and desiring to establish their own, have not subjected themselves to the justice of God*.[217] He condemns and declares to be persecutors of the faithful those who, despite the gleaming light of the Gospel and the grace of the New Covenant already illuminating the whole world through the incarnation of Christ, nevertheless maintain that circumcision and sacrificial victims and the rituals of the Law are necessary for those baptized in Christ. Against these persons, especially when he wrote these things, his zeal kept vigil, as the entire text of this Epistle, when it is carefully considered, plainly teaches.

Then he subsequently adds to those words of his that I have already quoted: *But what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman'. So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free, by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free. Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul tell you, that*

215 Gal. 4:28-29.
216 2 Cor. 4:13; Paul quotes Ps. 115:10 (116:10).
217 Rom. 10:3.

if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.[218] With these words he makes it plain that he teaches that neither the writings nor the writers of the Old Covenant are to be driven from the domain of the Church like the bondwoman and her son. But he says that after the grace and freedom of the Gospel has begun to shine through Christ the carnal observance of the Old Covenant will cease, and, after being transformed into the spiritual sense, it is to be faithfully carried out by the heirs of the New Covenant. For what the Lord says in the Gospel, that *one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the Law, till all be fulfilled*,[219] must be understood in this way, because those things ought always to be taken literally that the Law and the prophets plainly say about faith in the truth and in the works of justice and about the purification of the heart for the sake of seeing God. But whatever things were ordered to be observed carnally by a people who were still carnal, such as circumcision itself, the offering of sacrificial victims, the daily cleansing of the chronic leprosy not only of men, but also of their homes and clothing,[220] and innumerable things of this kind – these things were supposed to be observed literally up to the time of the Lord's incarnation. However, from the day when the Lord, rising again from the dead, opened the perception of his disciples, so that they might understand the Scriptures and discern the enigmas of prophecy in the open light, it was proper for these things to be read in the church because of the authority of prophecy, but to be observed spiritually and not carnally **/241/** by the illumination of grace. Although in Jerusalem the primitive Church still observed many rituals of the Law literally, with those who had been called to the faith from the Gentiles also living in the Jewish manner, at length, having spread far and wide throughout the world, it began to acquire even bishops and teachers from the Gentiles, who took no heed of Jewish observance, but, with Christian simplicity, rejoiced to obey only the doctrines of the apostles and evangelists. It is clear that the allegorical figure of the sons of Abraham harmonizes with this authoritative disposition of the Church. For before Isaac was born, Abraham and Sarah delighted in Ishmael as if in an only son, since he showed nothing yet of pride or levity in his mind or manners, because before the Lord's incarnation and the revelation of grace, everyone under the Law, even those spiritually informed, rejoiced that the Law was being observed literally by the people with a sincere devotion of the heart. And deservedly, for the same people did not resist grace, nor did they prefer the Law to the Gospel; but they eagerly

218 Gal. 4:30-5:2. Paul loosely quotes Gen. 21:10.
219 Matt. 5:18.
220 Cf. Lev. 14:33-57.

pursued in a faithful spirit those commandments of justice alone which they had received.

But after the birth of Isaac and before he was weaned, their love of Ishmael indeed began to diminish, as one might expect when they were congratulating themselves as parents on the birth of Isaac, who was as it were the proper son of them both. Nevertheless, they did not at this point discuss the expulsion of Ishmael and his mother, because the Church of believers rejoiced that the grace of the Gospel had now been unveiled and the apostles were preaching Christ, and the teachers themselves rejoiced in the promise of the kingdom of God that had been bestowed upon them, and yet they did not struggle to reject the observance of circumcision and sacrificial victims and the festivals of the Law as if it had immediately become superfluous. And neither were they strong enough suddenly to reject as injurious those things which they knew had been ordained by God, especially since the still tender and as it were suckling infancy of the holy Church was being nourished amid customs of this kind. But when Isaac was weaned, Sarah saw the son of the bondwoman playing, and determined that he should be cast out with his mother, because after the Church of Christ gained strength in the faith from the Gentiles, there came *certain men from Judea*, carnal in understanding, as though they were truly the sons of the bondwoman, and not yet made free by the spirit of grace in Christ, teaching *the brethren*, and saying, *that except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved*,[221] which had more to do with play and vainglory than with the truth of the Gospel. More precisely, not the least of the persecution was that they wished to lead those who were enjoying the gift of the light that had now been revealed **/242/** back into the shadows of figures. Hence, by grace, the mother through the council of the apostles soon determined that this doctrine with its authors was to be cast out, saying, *for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son Isaac*. The Apostle expounded this with the son of the free woman, because in no way are the false teachers to be accepted with the heralds of the truth who preach that we are to be saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus. They maintain that this grace will benefit us at last, provided that we are also consecrated by circumcision according to the ritual of the Law; but instead those who deny the power of that grace, or pride themselves on their works without grace, will remain forever deprived of the inheritance of grace, which is in Christ. There are some in the Church even today who are steeped indeed in the sacred truths of the New Covenant,

221 Acts 15:1.

but adhere by the volition of their carnal mind to the Old Covenant and to the figure of Hagar and Ishmael – not that they are truly following the commandments of the Old Covenant, of which the Lord says, *But if you will enter into life, keep the commandments*,[222] but because they seek temporal benefits from the Lord to the neglect of eternal ones. They prefer to embrace those things which the Old Testament when it is understood on the literal level sometimes seems to denote, such as what the Lord says through the Prophet, *If you are willing, and will hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land*,[223] rather than what he himself says, *Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God*.[224] Concerning these the Apostle says, *For all seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's*.[225] These are persons who either persist until the time of their death in wicked deeds among good Catholics, or are expelled from the Church by episcopal decree, like sons of a bondwoman by the free woman Sarah, on account of their heresies and open schisms. Nevertheless, in the Judgement to come, all who have not amended their ways beforehand are pronounced strangers and exiles from the inheritance of the blessing, for: *Whosoever commits sin, is the servant of sin. Now the servant abides not in the house forever; the Son abides forever. If therefore,* he says, *the Son has made you free, you shall be free indeed*.[226]

THE END

222 Matt. 19:17.
223 Isa. 1:19.
224 Luke 6:20.
225 Philipp. 2:21.
226 John 8:34-36.

APPENDIX 1
PLUMMER'S ARGUMENT FOR THE YEAR 720 DEFENDED

Jones dismissed Plummer's argument for the year 720 on the grounds that Bede was not making a 'computistical statement' in the passage that Plummer cited, but rather that he was

> explaining the literal meaning of Gen. viii, 14: *mense ii, xxvii dies*. These are precise data, not to be altered, and in whatever year Bede wrote he would have to use them. True, since he was writing for *rudibus*, he did simplify the problem by stating it in terms of the Julian solar calendar rather than the Hebraic lunar calendar, using *kl. apr.* rather than *xxvii Iar*. He simplified even further by choosing the Calends of April rather than xxvii … . So there is no reason for assigning any recension of *In Gen*. to the year 720.[1]

Bede, however, is *not* 'explaining the literal meaning of Gen. viii, 14: *mense ii, xxvii dies*'.[2] He is doing something rather different – showing that the duration of the flood was not, as the reader might suppose, 375 days but exactly one solar year. How was this to be made clear to a non-specialist audience, who could not be assumed to understand the technical details of the difference between lunar and solar months and years?

Bede's solution (as Jones notes) was to rephrase the problem as far as possible in terms of the Roman (solar) calendar. He chooses his words very carefully, speaking not of lunar, but of Roman months. At least some of his intended audience might have known that the twelve-month period from the first of April to the next 31st of March constituted one (solar) year of 365 days. They would not have to know which lunar month or months were involved or even about lunar months at all. They probably knew better than we do that the period from one new moon to the next, or from one full moon to the next, was somewhere between 29 and 30 days, a bit less than the average Roman month. So they would not have been surprised to read

1 Jones, Introduction to Bede, *In Gen*., p. ix.

2 I confess I do not understand the leap that Jones makes from '*xxvii Iar*' (the twenty-seventh day of Iyar) to '*kl. apr.*' (the first day of April).

or be told that a 17-day-old moon on April 1 of this year would have aged to a 27-day-old moon on March 31 of next year.

The solution is correctly stated, although it glosses over a difficulty that Bede would have been aware of, even if his audience was not. The Hebrew lunar months began with the first day of the new moon and alternated between 30 and 29 days in length. There were twelve of them, adding up to a total of 354 days in a lunar year. Because this total fell 11.25 days short of the (Julian) solar year, an extra 'embolismic' month of 30 days had to be added every few years to keep the lunar months roughly in line with the seasons. An embolismic lunar year consisted of 384 days. Lunar months 1 and 2 were 'Nisan' and 'Iyar', roughly April and May. The relationship of Nisan to the Roman calendar year was crucial to Bede, because on it, or more precisely, on the fourteenth day (the full moon) of Nisan, depended the calculation of the date of Easter. The seventeenth day of Nisan falls on April 1 only and always in the eighteenth year of the 19-year lunar cycle that was the fundamental part of Bede's 532-year cycle for making this calculation.[3] During his lifetime this happened only twice, in 701 and 720. The eighteenth year of the lunar cycle was a 'common' year of twelve lunar months (the year 720, unlike 701, was a leap year in the Julian calendar, but this discrepancy caused no problem, because the extra day was inserted in February before the seventeenth day of the moon in April). The nineteenth year of the lunar cycle, however, was always 'embolismic'. It had a thirteenth month of 30 days, which had to come between 17 Nisan in 720 and 27 Nisan in 721 (the same would have been true in 701). If Bede had stated the problem in the language of Genesis, he would have had to say: 'If 17 Nisan fell today on April 1, 27 Nisan would fall next year on April 30 [13 months or 395 days later] …'. This proposition would hardly persuade his readers that the flood lasted 365 days.

Bede's argument does not depend on calculating from the seventeenth day of the moon any more than it does from the second Hebrew month, but he surely picked the seventeenth for his illustration on the basis of Gen. 7:11 (not Gen. 8:14, as Jones states). We can confirm this claim from his similar discussion of the length of the flood in his technical treatise *De temporum ratione*: 'When in the book of Genesis Noah is said to have gone into the Ark with his folk on the 17th day of the second month, and to have left it on the 27th day of the same month after the Flood, the only correct way of

3 *DTR* 19-20; 56 (*BOT*, pp. 218–22; 276–78); Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, Appendix 2, p. 396.

understanding this is that a whole solar year, that is, 365 days, is signified. For the Moon, which this year, for instance, is in its 17th day on the nones of May [May 7] will next year be 27 days old on the day before the nones of May'.[4] Here, Bede's calculation is based on *both* elements of the date in Gen. 7:11, the day and the month – what he took to be the equivalent of the seventeenth of Iyar (though, again, it need not have been), and there is no question but that he refers to the current year. As Wallis points out, 'This passage must have been composed in 722, when the calculated Moon would have been 17 days old on May 7'.[5] In *DTR* Bede is not simplifying for the sake of the *rudes*. The year 722 was the first year of the 19-year lunar cycle. Bede expected his students to be able to do the mathematics,[6] but we can take a shortcut via the table 'Quota Sit Luna in Kalendis per Cyclum', from which we learn that in the first year of the cycle May 1 was the eleventh day of the moon (in the second month Iyar); the moon would therefore be in its seventeenth day on May 7.[7] Similarly, in the second year of the cycle May 1 was the twenty-second day of the moon (again, in the second month Iyar); the moon would therefore be in its twenty-seventh day on May 6, the 365th day of the preceding solar year (May 7, 722 – May 6, 723). Bede had no trouble here in adapting 'precise data, not to be altered' to the year in which he was writing.

Jones's rebuttal to Plummer implies that Bede's example was entirely hypothetical, that it had no necessary connection to any specific year (that is, whatever the actual day of the moon on April 1 of any year, *imagine* that it is the seventeenth and you will see that the twenty-seventh day will fall next year, 365 days later, on March 31[8]). He may be right. Nevertheless, if the year made no difference to Bede, and the data did (even if somewhat altered), why did he not use for his illustration the seventeenth day of the moon on the first of May (the seventeenth day of Iyar)? This would work equally well as far as clarity is concerned: the twenty-seventh day of the moon in the following year would fall on April 30, neatly completing one solar year, and (if precise data were the point) he might have written with a

4 Bede, *DTR* 11.40-45 (trans. Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, p. 43).

5 Wallis, *The Reckoning of Time*, p. 43, n. 121. This, incidentally, indicates that Bede worked on *DTR* over a period of at least three years from 722 to 725.

6 Cf. Jones, *BOT*, p. 136.

7 Jones, Notes, *BOT*, pp. 354–56 (including table, 'Quota Sit Luna in Kalendis per Cyclum', p. 356).

8 This will be true in three years out of four, but in every fourth year a leap-day will bring the total to 366.

clearer conscience. In fact these conditions actually occurred in the seventh year of the lunar cycle, in both 709 and 728.[9]

On balance, it looks as though the year was what Bede was thinking of, and the year was 720. Had Bede been writing with the mindset of a latter age, he could have obviated all our difficulties by saying something like, 'If today, in the year 720 …', or 'If five years ago, in the year 720 …'. It is an illuminating paradox that the man who more than anyone else was responsible for enabling us to think this way (because we live in a world in which '2006' is universally understood, without calculation, to refer to the year in which I happen to be writing these words), could not use his own system of *anno Domini* dating to make his meaning clearer to his audience. But the time when even an educated audience would unreflectively assign a number to the current year was still far off.

9 Year 7 of the lunar cycle is common, but year 8 is embolismic, so the same difficulty that I described in connection with year 18 applies here.

APPENDIX 2
TEXTUAL CORRECTIONS AND EMENDATIONS

The following list combines corrections of errors resulting from faulty transcription or misprinting with emendations to the text as printed in CCSL 118A in those instances where my translation is based on a reading that differs from the one adopted by Jones. It is important to stress that this is in no sense a re-editing of *In Genesim*. I have intervened only in those instances where I was unable to offer a satisfactory translation of the printed text. Both corrections and emendations are based on examination of the readings in question in all the printed editions listed below and in the four manuscripts of *In Genesim* presently held in British libraries. The *sigla* of the latter are printed in bold (**A**, **L**, **Lp**, **W**). Other manuscript readings are cited from Jones's apparatus. In most cases a correction/emendation that is supported by both **ALpW** (**ALLpW** as far as 1.1224) and **Martène** (= Martène + Giles + Migne) can be assumed to be a correction of a typographical or transcriptional error.

Giles = *Commentarii in principium Genesis*, ed. J. A. Giles
Hrabanus Maurus = *Commentaria in Genesim*, ed. J.-P. Migne
Martène = *Expositio in Genesim*, ed. Edmond Martène (**Martène** = Martène + Giles + Migne; ***Martène** = Martène + Migne [Biblical passage omitted by Giles])
Migne = *Hexaemeron*, ed. J.-P. Migne
(References to Augustine, Gregory, Jerome, Orosius, Pliny, and the Vulgate are made specific in the notes to the text.)

A = CAMBRIDGE, Jesus College Q A 14.
B = MILAN, Biblioteca Ambrosiana C 83 sup.
C = PARIS, Bibliothèque nationale, Lat. 13373.
E = EINSIEDELN, Stiftsbibliothek 376.
G = PARIS, Bibliothèque nationale, Lat. 13401.
L = OXFORD, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 159.
Lp = LONDON, Lambeth Palace 148.

P = PARIS, Bibliothèque nationale, Lat. 12271.
S = ST. GALL, Stiftsbibliothek 255.
T = TROYES, Paris, Bibliothèque municipale 1006.
W = CAMBRIDGE, Trinity College B.4. 32.

Book/Line	**CCSL 118A**	**Reading adopted**
1.15	*onus*	*opus*, **ALLpW**, **Martène**
1.127	*diuinae*	*diuina*, **ALLpW**, BP, **Martène**
1.135	*autem ut in*	*autem in*, **ALpW**
1.145	*hominum*	*homines*, **Martène**
1.268	*solidate*	*soliditate*, **ALLpW**, **Martène**
1.291	*audiuimus*	*audimus*, **ALpW**, ES, **Martène**
1.373-74	*aquae aestimator*	*aquae creator atque aestimator*, **Martène**
1.452	*ubique*	*ubi quam*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
1.453-54	*uestifia*	*uestigia*, **ALLpW**, **Martène**
1.484	*exortum*	*exortus*, **ALpW**, B, **Martène**
1.609	*quia quam*	*quisquam*, **ALpW**, P, **Martène**
1.642	*praetereundem*	*praetereundum*, **ALLpW**, **Martène**
1.648	*cederant*	*cederent*, **ALLpW**, **Martène**
1.673	*ipse*	*ipsae*, **AL**, Martène, Giles
1.733	*plasmaretur*	*plasmatur*, **ALLpW**, BCP, **Martène**
1.734	*erigeretur*	*erigitur*, **ALLpW**, BCP, **Martène**
1.765	*subditus*	*subditus et*, **ALLpW**, CES, **Martène**
1.770	*il est*	*id est*, **ALLpW**, **Martène**
1.888-89	*testimonium*	*in testimonium*, **ALLpW**, Martène, Giles
1.904	*infirmorum*	*infirmiorum*, **ALpW**, GPT^2, Hrabanus Maurus
1.994-95	*praecescesserint*	*praecesserint*, **ALLpW**, **Martène**
1.1086	*quaerebantur*	*querebantur*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
1.1108	*ad auram*	*ad horam*, P, **Martène**
1.1113	*quos arca*	*quos clauserat arca*, **ALLpW**, **Martène**
1.1136-37	*suscipiente*	*suscipientes*, **L**, **Martène**
1.1146	*aliorum quoque regum*	*aliorumque regum*, P, **Martène**
1.1148	*insigna*	*signa*, **ALLpW**, BP, **Martène**
1.1164	*magnis*	*magis*, **ALLpW**
1.1165	*ab*	*ad*, **ALLpW**, **Martène**
1.1181	*conati sunt*	*nati sunt*, **L**, BP, **Martène**
1.1184	*uelletribus*	*uelleribus*, **ALLpW**, **Martène**
1.1187	*erat toto imaginis*	*erat imaginis*, **ALLpW**, BPS, **Martène**
1.1220-21	*perficitur*	*perficietur*, ES
1.1255	*sed et*	*sed*, **ALpW**, BP, **Martène**
1.1386	*sita*	*sit*, **ALpW**, B, **Martène**

1.1409-10	*retorsus*	*retrorsus*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Augustine
1.1491	*Deum*	*Dominum*, **ALpW**, BP, **Martène**, Augustine
1.1525	*nunc procul*	*non procul*, **A** (corr. from *nunc*), Hrabanus Maurus, Pliny
1.1529	*indeque*	*inde*, **ALpW**, Augustine
1.1580	*dispensationem*	*dispensationi*, **ALpW**, B
1.1626	*totus*	*tutus*, **ALpW**, P, Augustine
1.1673	*in terra*	*interna*, **ALpW**, B, Hrabanus Maurus
1.1681	*in terra*	*terra*, S^2, Augustine
1.1744	*cunctis*	*cuncti*, **ALpW**, S^1, Hrabanus Maurus
1.1748	*Dei*	*Deo*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Hrabanus Maurus
1.1792	*unde femina*	*in feminam*, S, Hrabanus Maurus
1.1895	*humilitationem*	*humiliationem*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
1.1965	*lege*	*legi*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Augustine, Vulgate
1.2033	*referamus*	*reseramus*, **LpW**, Martène, Giles, Augustine
1.2213	*fecitque*	*fecit quoque*, **ALpW**, BS, Vulgate
1.2297	*uinculis*	*uinculis carnis* [*carnis* add., **A**, S], **ALpW**, S, Hrabanus Maurus
2.108	*sic recte*	*si recte*, **ALpW**, Augustine
2.125	*cum*	*eum*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Augustine
2.167	*existet*	*existit*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.227	*et*	*ut*, **Martène**, Jerome
2.261	*fit*	*sit*, **ALpW**, P, **Martène**, Jerome
2.317	*Christi*	*Christo*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.338	*liuori*	*liuore*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.360	*ad te*	*ad me*, **ALpW**, ***Martène**, Vulgate, Augustine
2.435	*cogitionis*	*cognitionis*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.499	*septimum*	*septimam*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.514	*praeuidebat*	*non praeuidebat*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.525	*legisse*	*egisse*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.562	*hos*	*nos*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.615	*interficit*	*interfecit*, **ALpW**, B, Martène, Giles, Jerome
2.696	*gratiae*	*gratia*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.709-10	*maledicti*	*maledici*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.728-29	*praeteriti*	*praeteriri*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.736	*addidit*	*et addidit*, **LpW**, **Martène**
2.757	*subiunguntur*	*subiungitur*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.817	*ambulabant*	*ambulabunt*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Vulgate
2.838	*consensuros*	*conscensuros*, **ALpW**, P
2.849	*demonstret*	*demonstrat*, **ALpW**
2.862	*annis*	*annus*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.905	*nomine*	*nomini*, **Martène**
2.1026	*dolore*	*dolere*, **ALpW**, **Martène**

2.1089	*loborantes*	*laborantes*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.1220	*sicut enim templum*	*sicut templum*, **Martène**
2.1251	*arce*	*arcae*, **AW**, **Martène**
2.1252	*diffunderetur*	*diffunderentur*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.1369	*quosque cum*	*quoscumque*, **Martène**
2.1373	*Origines*	*Origenes*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Augustine
2.1443	*duo et duo*	*duo duo*, P, Vulgate
2.1453	*duo et duo*	*duo duo*, P, Vulgate
2.1577	*aperti*	*apertae*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Vulgate
2.1614	*unde*	*undae*, **A**, Martène, Giles
2.1633	*uirtutem*	*uirtutum*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.1764	*inlecebris*	*inlecebras*, **ALpW**, Martène
2.1786	*et non reuertebatur*	*et reuertebatur*, **W**, BP, **Martène**, Vulgate
2.1788	*et non reuertebatur*	*et reuertebatur*, **W**, **Martène**
2.1795	*institui*	*instituti*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.1810	*current*	*curent*, **W** (corr. from *current*), **ALp**, **Martène**
2.1817	*expectabis*	*expectatis*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Vulgate
2.1841	*prophetiam*	*prophetia*, **ALpW**, P, **Martène**
2.1871	*subpremam*	*supremam*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.1880	*resesari*	*reserari*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.1961	*arca*	*area*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.2013	*percepte*	*perceptae*, **A**, **Martène**
2.2076	*filii*	*filiis*, **ALpW**, ***Martène**, Vulgate
2.2087	*obedentia*	*obedientia*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.2116	*peronas*	*personas*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
2.2215	*peruenire*	*peruenere*, **LpW**, **Martène**
2.2291	*proba*	*probra*, **LpW**, **Martène**
2.2298	*retorsum*	*retrorsum*, **LpW**, ***Martène**, Vulgate
2.2335	*a quo*	*a qua*, **Martène**
2.2380	*duritiae*	*duritia*, **A** (corr. from *duritie*), **LpW**, **Martène**
2.2411	*designat*	*designant*, **Martène**
2.2427	*seruitorum*	*seruitiorum*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.35	*thar*	*thetam*, **A**, Jerome
3.36	*tar*	*tau*, **ALpW**, Jerome
3.44-45	*aurem*	*autem*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.58	*facere*	*fecere*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.82	*septuagesimo*	*septuagesimo primo*, **ALpW**, Jerome
3.186	*fines*	*et fines*, **Martène**
3.222	*haec*	*hac*, **LpW**, **Martène**
3.266	*immutata sint*	*immutata sunt*, **Martène**, Jerome
3.316	*labuntur*	*lambuntur*, **ALpW**, P
3.343	*linguas*	*linguae*, **A²LpW** (*lingue*)

3.357	*sermonem*	*sermonum*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Vulgate
3.463	*aderant*	*adhaerent*, **W**, **A** (*adherent*), **Lp** (*adherent* corr. from *aderent*), Gregory
3.469	*inlicitis*	*in inlicitis*, **ALpW**, BP, Gregory
3.472	*legatur*	*agatur*, **A²LpW**, Gregory
3.481	*intellegetur*	*intelligeretur*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Augustine
3.502	*ad auditum ueritatis*	*auditum ueritati*, **Martène**
3.509	*pro*	*populo*, B
3.523	*campestribus*	*in campestribus*, **Martène**, Jerome
3.538	*atque*	*aeque*, **ALpW**, B, Orosius
3.540	*germinae*	*geminae*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Orosius
3.569?	*sociatis etiam exterorum omnium qui aduenerant uocem intellegerent per gratiam Spiritus sancti, fideles*	*sociatis per gratiam Spiritus Sancti linguis, fideles etiam exterorum omnium qui aduenerant uocem intelligerent*, **Martène**
3.589	*ad eum*	*ad eam*, **ALpW**
3.606	*quae*	*qui*
3.642	*extiterunt*	*extiterant*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.644	*connecti sunt*	*connecti*, B
3.701	*quae ab aliis aeque stultae*	*quae non ab aliis aeque stultis*, **ALpW**
3.703	*idem*	*id est*, **A**
3.763	*generationem*	*generationum*, **ALpW**, P, **Martène**
3.832	*hae generationes*	*hae sunt generationes*, **ALpW**, BP, Augustine
3.855	*apparente*	*a parente*, **A²LpW²**, P, **Martène**
3.957	*saluator*	*saluatur*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.963	*Abrae*	*Abrahae*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Vulgate
3.1048	*at te*	*ad te*, **ALpW**, P, **Martène**, Vulgate
3.1112	*eiectos*	*electos*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.1113	*deorsum*	*deorum*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.1141	*cessabunt*	*cessabant*, **A²LpW**, **Martène**
3.1151	*pro quibus tantum omnibus*	*pro quibus omnibus*, **ALpW**, B
3.1208	*secula*	*seculo*, **ALpW**, BP, **Martène**
3.1238	*inuocare*	*inuocasse*, **Martène**
3.1239	*esse perhibetur positus*	*esse positus*, **Martène**
3.1387	*renouerat*	*renouaret*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.1391-92	*tertiumque ibi altare*	*tertiumque altare*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.1455	*sequeretur*	*sequerentur*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.1464	*tali*	*taliter*, **Martène**

3.1467	*rapiuntur*	*rapientur*, **Martène**
3.1470	*perstingitur*	*perstringitur*, **ALpW**, Giles
3.1498	*electis*	*eiectis*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.1500	*Seri*	*Seir*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
3.1509	*Sobul*	*Sobal*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Vulgate
3.1515	*percusserunt*	*percussi sunt*, **AW**, **Martène**
3.1544	*filio*	*patre*
3.1555	*transeat*	*transierat*, **ALpW**, B
3.1646	*benedictus Deus*	*benedictus*, **ALpW**, P^2, Vulgate
3.1692	*emere*	*emerit*, **Martène**
3.1705	*meam*	*meum*, **ALpW**, ***Martène**, Vulgate
3.1784	*trahendam*	*trahendum*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.8	*benedictus Deus excelsus*	*benedictus Abram Deo excelso*, **ALpW**, Vulgate
4.11	*positio*	*posito*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.39	*nominibus*	*hominibus*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.84	*etsi*	*et si*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.256	*solebant*	*solebat*, **Martène**
4.269	*diuina*	*diuinae*, **ALpW**, B
4.318	*dubitat*	*dubitabat*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.430	*qui*	*quia*, **ALpW**, B, Martène, Giles
4.435	*parebat*	*patebat*, **ALpW**, B, Martène, Giles
4.510	*carnem suam praeputii*	*carnem praeputii sui*, **ALpW**, **Martène** (*carnem sui praeputii*), Vulgate
4.549	*qui*	*quia*, **ALpW**, BP
4.556	*conuallo*	*conualle*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Vulgate
4.573	*nobis*	*et uobis*, **A**, **LpW** (om. *et*), **Martène** (om. *et*), Vulgate
4.584	*corpus reficiendo*	*cor corpus reficiendo* (*corpus correficiendo*, BP, **Martène**)
4.623	*benedicitur*	*bene dicitur*, **LpW**, **Martène**
4.636	*aliquod*	*aliquos*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.726	*ipse*	*ipsa*, **ALpW**
4.732	*armento*	*de armento*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.761	*isto*	*sto*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Vulgate
4.839	*hoc est eodem*	*hoc eodem*, **ALpW**, Vulgate
4.980	*prohibentur*	*perhibentur*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.980	*lata*	*laeta*, **ALpW**, P, **Martène**
4.1028	*generes*	*generos*, **ALpW**, Martène, Giles
4.1058	*rapiuntur*	*rapientur*, **Martène**
4.1136	*omnem*	*omnia*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.1150	*inretiri*	*inretire*, **ALpW**, B
4.1175	*fornicatibus*	*fornicatoribus*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Vulgate

4.1187	*conspectu*	*conspecta*, **ALpW**, BP
4.1210	*retorsum*	*retrorsum*, **ALpW**, **Martène**, Vulgate
4.1227-28	*praeteritorem*	*praeteritorum*, **ALpW**, Martène, Giles
4.1234	*timensque ne articulo*	*timens ne quae* (*qui*, **ALpW**) *et* (om. **LpW**) *articulo*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.1289	*suberigitur*	*subripitur*, **ALpW**, BP
4.1313	*quae*	*quia*, **ALpW**
4.1313	*insitae*	*insitum*, **ALpW**
4.1314	*diuinitus*	*non diuinitus*, **ALpW**
4.1315	*cognomino*	*cognominatur*
4.1315	*et*	*autem*, **ALpW**
4.1315	*populum meum*	*populus meus*, **ALpW**
4.1318	*merosus*	*meroris*, Jerome
4.1333	*mundalis*	*mundialis*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.1457	*dixit*	*dicit*, **Martène**
4.1460	*oppobrium*	*opprobrium*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.1534	*bone*	*bona*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.1547	*mortuis*	*mortis*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.1566	*designaretur*	*designaret*, B
4.1598	*eici*	*eice*, **ALpW**, ***Martène** (*eiice*), Vulgate
4.1610-11	*psalmistae*	*psalmista*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.1634	*delebatur*	*debebatur*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.1645	*apostolus*	*apostolos*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.1658	*sunt subiecti*	*non sunt subiecti*, **ALpW**, Martène, Giles, Vulgate
4.1670	*circumdamini*	*circumcidamini*, **LpW**, Vulgate
4.1715	*laetabitur*	*laetabatur*, **ALpW**, **Martène**
4.1724	*quidem*	*quidam*, **ALpW**, Vulgate
4.1726	Christo	in Christo, **ALpW**

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